

MEN, MOVEMENTS, AND MYSELF



PORTRAIT BY FRANCIS DODD, R.A.

MEN, MOVEMENTS, AND MYSELF

BY
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To my colleagues in many causes, whose patience,
sympathy, and encouragement have been
to me a sure and ever-present help
in hours of doubt and depression

I always wanted to make a clean breast of it;
And now it is made.

R. BROWNING, *The Flight of the Duchess*.

PREFACE

ANY one who is bold enough to write the story of his own life should be careful lest what he writes be partly fiction. He should never forget that he is writing history, even though the subject be himself. He is therefore called upon to resist the temptation to endow himself with desirable, but unfamiliar virtues, and to be frank to the point of injury concerning his own faults. The reader is entitled to expect from him, not a caricature, but a recognizable portrait.

The main purpose of this book is not, however, to describe the thoughts and the experiences of an individual, but rather to make a personal contribution to our knowledge of a too little understood aspect of English life during the past three generations. I have not tried to write the history of the various movements with which I have been connected; my aim has been to interpret the spirit and temper, the fervour, the enthusiastic inexperience, and the very rare devotion of groups of generous-minded men and women to ideals and causes that deeply moved them. If the book fails in its attempt to commend to the judgment of the reader their example and character, I shall regret that it was written.

Very few lives are so crowded with incidents as to justify a book about them; and my own experience has been singularly free from the excitements and events with which autobiographies usually deal. My life has been a life of plodding through an uneventful routine of unromantic tasks. It has been made possible for me only by having been spent nearly always in the service of causes in which I believed, and to which I found myself able to give continuous devotion and loyalty. But I have been closely connected with events which will form a part of the history of my country, and in writing about them I have introduced myself only to the extent that will illustrate my association with them.

For their kindness in reading the manuscript of this book and for many valuable suggestions, I am greatly indebted to my friends and colleagues, Lord Ponsonby and Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb.

It is perhaps advisable that I should state that the word 'spiritual' in these pages is used to 'include all that appertains to the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral health of the human soul.'¹

¹ J. A. Leighton, *The Field of Philosophy*.

In what I have written I have described, rather than defended, the mental phases and the political activities through which I have passed. There are doubtless serious flaws in the story. The meaning of life has always seemed to me to be immensely more interesting than its incidents, and the spirit and purpose of both men and movements more important than their methods and their programmes. Thus, in my opinion, the Socialist and Freethought movements in England should be judged not by their immediate proposals and methods, but by the principles and ideals which govern and inspire them.

I venture to hope that what I have written about these and kindred movements, will find interested, if not sympathetic and approving, readers.

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CHAPTER I

ENGLISH VILLAGE LIFE SIXTY YEARS AGO

Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.—ST. JOHN viii 14.

THE 1st April was not a well-chosen day on which to be born, and facetiously-inclined friends of mine have not infrequently insisted that my birth on that day was one of nature's feeblest jokes. But for any one whose life was destined to be devoted to political, social, and religious questions, the year 1865 could scarcely have been bettered. It is indeed probable that the half-century which began with that year was one of the most interesting periods through which the human race has ever lived, and that no previous half-century added so many new and wonderful tools to man's use, or contributed so much to his knowledge. In one of his most exalted moments the prophet Isaiah rejoiced that the Lord had given unto men 'a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth';¹ and within the period of my own life mankind has received and enjoyed, without any sort of thanksgiving, either to God or to man, a multitude of even more marvellous blessings.

When I was a child there were no electric trams or trains, no electric or incandescent light, no motor cars, telephones, or aeroplanes. There were no typewriters, safety-razors, or gramophones. We had not then heard of appendicitis, influenza, or vitamins. There were no bananas, no cocktails, and no chewing gum; there was no Salvation Army, no Boy Scouts; and the dark world had to live as best it might, without the enlightening guidance of the *Daily Mail* and the Primrose League. The old 'penny-farthing' bicycle was still without a competitor, and the days of the wireless transmission of sound had not begun. The theatre was regarded as the home of the devil, 'the way to the Pit' as the direct 'way to hell,' and it was thought that foreigners had providentially been created for 'God's Englishmen' to throw bricks at. The chief duty of man was considered to be the fierce repression of his natural impulses; life was a monotony of toil, which was broken only by tired and sometimes hungry sleep. What a self-satisfied, stupid, and conceited little world it was!

¹ Isaiah xli 15.

The mind of man was nevertheless being stirred by strange new influences, and there was a quickening sense of impending change. The epoch-making *Origin of Species* had been published six years previously; Mendel's great work was published in 1865, after which it was forgotten for thirty-five years; and on the first day of January 1863 Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States of America, had issued the famous Slavery Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that 'all persons held as slaves within said designated States are, and henceforward shall be, free.' On the 14th April 1865, exactly a fortnight after I was born, this intrepid man, the greatest of modern democratic leaders, was assassinated in Ford's theatre at Washington by a mad tragedian, and in that year the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolished chattel-slavery for ever in the United States of America.

In England, Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1848, had begun to detach the minds of political thinkers from the older economic theories, and they became increasingly aware that something new was moving on the face of the waters. The bitter memories of the 'hungry forties' were being weakened under the influence of better social conditions, and there was also some evidence of a growing, and much needed, toleration in the great questions of race and religion. In 1858 Jews had, for the first time, been permitted to enter Parliament, and most of the Acts which had imposed disabilities upon Roman Catholics had been repealed. But nowhere on earth had votes then been conferred upon women, who were universally required to devote their lives to 'Küche, Kirche, und Kinder,' and the public execution of criminals persisted until the year 1867. All things considered it was a fascinating and well-chosen period in which to be born.

The first twelve years of my life were spent in and about the village of Sutton-on-Trent, in the county of Nottingham. It was a flat, damp, but not unattractive agricultural settlement. The Great North Road cut through the parish, and the Great Northern Railway ran from north to south along its western border. The greatest attraction of the village was, however, upon its eastern boundary where, running parallel with the railway, 'the broad-bosomed Trent, through rich meadows, full of cattle under tall shady trees,' runs on to 'the great sad Humber,' past 'the low-lying banks, the fog, the solitary vessels, the brackish marshes, and the water birds.'¹

¹ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*.

My parents were agricultural workers, and the household in which I was reared was composed of two sets of children; for my mother, who was a widow, had married a neighbour with a large family. The economic position of these combined families was such that all the children, boys and girls, had to begin work at a very early age, and to start life on their own account as soon as it was physically possible for them to leave the crowded home. I was eight years of age when I began to work in the fields, and the tasks through which I first began to experience 'the dignity of labour' were the care of grazing cattle, and the frightening of rooks and pigeons from newly-sown fields of corn or peas, or from the ripening crops. Those days spent alone in the fields and lanes, sometimes far away from the village, seemed at times to be long and lonely beyond endurance. And long they were, for, as the marauding birds began to feed at sunrise and at sunset remained unsatisfied, I was required to be in the fields early, and to stay late. In order to protect the crops as much as possible, I had to patrol the borders of the field throughout the day, and invent as many terrifying noises as possible, a task not in itself uncongenial to a small boy. The robbers were not, however, easily deceived, and they were quick to learn not only to disregard the noise, but to calculate the exact distance that a young arm could throw a stone. They were most exasperating creatures. When they were driven from one end of the field, they floated gently away and, with mocking cries, descended with an increased appetite upon the other. Among the many devices that I adopted to put fear into their pilfering hearts, was a wooden stake taken from a hedge, and charred with fire, in the vain endeavour to make it look like the barrel of gun; but the black poachers soon discovered that the 'gun' was a fake that could do them no harm. When, however, the farmer appeared with a real gun, and was lucky enough to kill one of them, its carcass was triumphantly displayed in the middle of the field as a warning to those still living, and for some days at least the advantage was on my side. But I hated those thieving birds as I have not hated anything else in my life.

Among the other field tasks of my boyhood days were the planting and lifting of potatoes, the thinning and weeding of turnips and carrots, the 'spudding' of thistles from the growing crops, or the gathering of 'twitch' behind the harrow or the plough. During the harvest period, straw 'bands' to bind the sheaves of corn had to be made for the gatherer (usually my mother),

who followed the mower (my stepfather), or for both of them when, as sometimes happened, they worked together behind the reaper. Most of these occupations were of a seasonal character, and in the intervening periods I attended the village school, where I learned the alphabet and the multiplication table. The wages paid for boy labour, for a day of from ten to twelve hours, and sometimes even longer, varied from fourpence to sixpence.

Very soon after this period, and before I had reached the age of ten, I was employed as a regular 'day-lad' on various outlying farms, notably one known as 'The New Barn,' and for a longer period, on a farm attached to the Bell Inn at the neighbouring village of Carlton-on-Trent. The working day began at six o'clock, and the lonely walk of two miles through the dark lanes in the winter mornings constituted the greatest horror of my young life. I was born in an ignorant and superstitious age, and the minds of children were systematically terrified by crude and wicked stories concerning troubled ghosts and malignant spirits. Consequently, the slightest noise of unseen bird or beast in those dark lanes filled me with terror, and I imagined that every tree or dark corner sheltered distressed and prowling creatures of the spirit world. When, as sometimes happened, I could join a friendly labourer who was also on his way to work, the relief was indescribable. On the many occasions when the journey had to be made alone, I used to whistle or sing in order to try to reduce my fears, or much oftener, to pray that my childish sins might be forgiven, and that I might be delivered from evil spirits. If by any chance I had met on one of these journeys the local chimney-sweep with the black face of his calling, I should have screamed with terror, for in my childish mind he was in some obscure way associated with the Evil One himself. The children of to-day are born into a saner and more enlightened world, and they will never experience the agony that ignorance inflicted upon the childish minds of their grandparents nearly seventy years ago. I knew every yard of those quiet and beautiful lanes, and I have never forgiven the superstition which made me fear them.

The day's work on the farm consisted in leading horses at the plough, harrow, or drill, from six o'clock in the morning until two in the afternoon, with a twenty minutes' interval for 'lunch' at ten. Then the horses were taken back to the stables where, when they had been fed, I also had a hurried meal, after which the horses were groomed, the cattle fed and watered, and the stables, byres, and

pig-sties cleaned and re-bedded. When six o'clock came, or much later during the hay and corn harvest, the day was ended by the two miles' tramp home on tired and sometimes blistered feet; then some kind of hot meal, and 'so to bed'!

It was under conditions such as these that the children of rural England then served the richest and most pious nation on the earth; and for duties and hours such as I have described, she rewarded them with wages of from half a crown to three shillings and sixpence per week. Was she not engaged in the breeding of a proud imperial people?

Psychologists are always trying to discover what happens in the mind of a child during the first years of its life, for the same reason that the historian goes back to the original documents or the geologist to the rocks. Sully, in his *Studies of Childhood*, says that 'much of the deeper childish experience can only reach us, if at all, years after it is over, through the faulty medium of memory—faulty even when it is the memory of a Goethe, a George Sand, a Robert Louis Stevenson.' What actually happens in the mind of a child? What is the nature of his thoughts, and how, and in what degree, do natural phenomena affect his imagination? It is impossible for an adult to recall with accuracy his earliest thoughts and fancies, because a child lives to some extent in a fantastic and rapidly changing world of his own creation. It is a world dominated by unsubstantial, but to him very real, personalities and powers.

I have many times tried to recall the nature of my thoughts when, as a child, I stood watching the peaceful flowing river, where the silence was broken only by the lowing of friendly cattle, by the notes of gentle singing-birds, or by the distant rumble of a passing train; but the way of my memory becomes confused and gets lost in an imaginative world of fantastic rivers and miraculous fields, and of dwarfs and giants such as never were on land or sea.

Nevertheless the main experiences of my childhood days remain so unmistakably vivid and constant in my memory that they cannot be far removed from the truth. The first certainty in my mind is that my mother and my stepfather were parents as good as any boy could have desired. My mother was unable to read or write, but I have never known, or heard of, any one who excelled her in forethought and matronly concern for those dependent upon her. My stepfather used teasingly to insist that her frugal hands could spread a pound of butter over the whole of the neighbouring churchyard, and then have sufficient left to cover the gravestones on both sides.

He read, slowly and with difficulty, the New Testament, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and simple religious tracts, and he could write an unaffected and homely family letter. He was in no sense what the world would consider an educated man; but he was as wise a counsellor as I have ever known. He was a devoted admirer of Mr. Gladstone, and definitely radical in his political opinions. I remember that, when smarting under what he considered unjust treatment on the part of a local farmer, who was also a 'local preacher,' he said: 'If I were no more religious than you are I would not dare to get into yonder pulpit even to sweep it out.' My stepbrothers and sisters grew up to be hard-working, respectable men and women, and good citizens; my elder brother died at a comparatively early age, leaving behind him a young family, and my sisters, Fanny, Lizzie, and Emily, all happily still alive, are, both in capacity and character, women of whom I have every right to be affectionately proud.

I know also that, although the wolf of want was never far from, and was sometimes half-way through, our cottage door, the unpretentious wisdom of its fireside lessons has been to me, in time of temptation and trouble, a powerful and ever-present help. When I recall my own blessings in this respect, I think with pity, and I hope with understanding, of those who are without such precious and sustaining memories. There were also many kindly neighbours, whose wise counsel and living example I thankfully recall. Memories of this kind cannot be false; they are written with strength and certainty upon the tablets of my mind.

There are other memories connected with the fierce and unbroken struggle for food and shelter on the part of nearly every family in the village; a struggle in which every human faculty was, of necessity, engaged. What failure might involve was suggested by the forlorn beggar at the door, and by the hapless tramp on the Great North Road. Among the recollections of my childhood are those of worthy old men and women, friends and neighbours of my parents, who, after perhaps fifty or sixty years of labour, had been compelled to take the dreaded journey 'over the hill to the poorhouse.' No human institution was ever more hated and feared by free men than the English workhouse of sixty years ago was hated and feared by those proud peasants, and no one without personal knowledge of them, and without experience of the conditions under which they lived, can appreciate the stern thrift, born of fear and the pride of independence, with which a few

coppers were reserved from each week's scanty income for payments to the Friendly Society, the pig-club, or the savings bank. These parochial institutions were the poor man's first line of defence against the accursed place, which to them was but 'a prison with a milder name, which few inhabit without dread or shame.'¹ The aged and the sick would forgo every comfort, cling despairingly to their damp and often derelict cottage, and pray that death would save them from the crowning indignity of the 'workus.' And when their feeble efforts failed, when the poor suffering pride had been completely broken, they again prayed that as few eyes as possible should witness their departure. They were the ill-requited products of their age, as essential to the wellbeing of the nation as sunshine or rain, yet they went through life with a downcast gaze as though they wished to apologize to the world for the space they occupied.

Next to the horror of the workhouse, the greatest fear of the labourer was debt which might involve the loss of his 'home.' A small cottage, when the bailiffs are in possession, is a sorry place at the best. The women and the children weep and grieve; the men grieve also, but they do not weep; they fret and fume and swear; but they rarely resist. I cannot recall a case where bailiffs were actively obstructed. The debts were usually very small, the furniture could seldom have been worth the seizing, and the bailiffs were as a rule got out of the cottage with the hasty help of neighbours—most of whom were nearly as poor as those whose few precious sticks of furniture they so generously helped to save.

Another abiding memory concerns the tireless industry of these agricultural workers. I doubt whether men and women ever worked harder, and I do not believe that necessary and honourable toil was ever more inadequately rewarded. They had no recreation beyond a perhaps weekly and half-ashamed visit to the public-house, or an occasional social event at one of the local chapels. Except on Christmas Day, and to some extent on Sundays, there was no respite from the strain of their calling, and they were not then comforted by the hope of better working conditions. It was fear, not hope, that drove them. Pensions for the aged were scarcely dreamed of in those great days of prosperous capitalism. The Psalmist had proclaimed the need for them many centuries before, and his appeal to the higher powers of life to 'desert me not

¹ George Crabbe, *The Borough*.

in mine age; forsake me not when my strength faileth' was not unknown to the pastors and the masters of the time.

Romantic writers, politicians, and passing motorists, love to dwell upon the assumed delights of an agriculturist's life, and the Christmas card, depicting the thatched cottage with ivy clinging to its walls, is accepted as a symbol of ideal conditions. The people who are so thrilled by these artistic productions know such places only from the outside. Their interiors are less pleasing. There is no leaking roof visible in the pictures, nor do those who are moved by their apparent beauty have to live in the places they so much admire. The absence of drainage and a damp-proof course is not shown; but the cottage dweller, whose chronic rheumatism is part of the rent that he pays, is more restrained in his rapture. Charles Kingsley knew far more about them than does the speeding motorist, and he told his fellow-countrymen in passionate words exactly what they were:

When, packed in one reeking chamber,
Man, maid, mother, and little ones lay;
While the rain pattered in on the rotting bride-bed,
And the walls let in the day.

The plain truth is that agricultural work is far from being an ideal occupation, and in my young days, before machinery had somewhat reduced the physical strain upon the labourer, it was exhausting, unhonoured, and grossly underpaid. It involved exposure and risk, and nearly every conceivable bodily hardship, and very few of those who managed to escape from it ever returned to it of their own free will. Yet the work of the agricultural labourer is a highly skilled occupation, and few men in any calling are called upon to perform so many essential and widely divergent tasks. The art of swinging and whetting a scythe, cutting a hedge, thatching a stack of corn, the sowing of seed from a hopper, the training and management of horses, the drilling of peas, turnips, and corn, and the use of tools generally, require a range of accomplishments and an experience of animals and seasons far beyond anything that the 'skilled artisan' is expected to possess.

The conditions under which the farm labourer works to-day are much better than were those of the time about which I write, and the improvement is due almost entirely to his own organized effort. Lord Ernle, in his able book, *The Land and its People*, says: 'The year 1872 stands out as a landmark in the record of progress. One winter evening (7th February) nearly a thousand men gathered at

Wellesbourne in Warwickshire to listen to one of themselves, known for miles round as a skilled hedge-cutter and a local preacher. The speaker was Joseph Arch. It was a dark night, and lanterns, swung from bean poles, shed a feeble light on the scene. Mounted on a pig stool, set under a chestnut tree, Arch looked down on a sea of upturned faces, over which flickered the uncertain gleams of swaying lanterns. In his mind, steeped in the imagery and phraseology of the Bible, he likened his audience to the Children of Israel "with the darkness all about them . . . waiting for someone to lead them out of the land of Egypt." The outcome was the decision to form a Union. The men demanded 2s. 8d. per day; hours 6 to 5, except on Saturday, when they were to be 6 to 3; and 4d. an hour overtime. Little notice seems to have been taken of their demand, and in March they struck. . . . 'After three months they won a partial victory. Wages were advanced—in some cases to the 16s. which had been demanded.'¹

The Union, which was then so sanely founded, quickly lost the sympathy of the general public when it began to touch political issues, notwithstanding that the farmers openly joined in political warfare on the side of the landlords; but it nevertheless aroused in the labourer a sense of organized power and suggested to him the advantages of a greatly extended organization. It was in any case instrumental after more than a decade in securing the vote for the agricultural labourer, and it eventually obtained for him some slight increase in wages. Thus, if the position of the agricultural labourer to-day is an improvement upon that prevailing fifty years ago, it is in no small degree due to the organization started by Joseph Arch. The farm labourer to-day enjoys the full rights of British citizenship; he can take part in the local or national government of his country; he is, in so far as he is organized, a part of the labour movement; his social status has been raised; he is entitled to receive compensation for accidents; he has the consoling assurance of the old-age pension; he enjoys some little improvement in housing and sanitation, medical treatment, and sick pay for himself, though not for his wife and children; and his wife and children do not have to slave by his side in the fields to the extent that was then customary. He is also comforted by the early prospect of unemployment pay.

Another influence which has helped to improve the position of the agricultural worker is the increase in the number of allotments,

¹ Lord Ernle, *The Land and its People*, p. 66.

and that these are serviceable both to the labourer and the community is proved by the statistics of pauperism. Those who have cultivated an allotment seldom become a charge upon the parish before they reach extreme old age; the produce of these tiny plots of land keeps them independent in mind as well as healthy in body. Perhaps because allotments helped to do this they were not encouraged by the farmers, and the rent charged for them was considerably higher than that for land of the same quality on the other side of the hedge which was cultivated by the farmer himself. The labourer who had a plot of land which would grow potatoes for his table and barley for his pig was in a position to be a trifle more independent than he who had only wages between himself and starvation.

The standard of life available to the farm labourer was often incredibly low. His food was of questionable nutritive value, and his cottage was frequently both unhealthy and overcrowded. Boiled fat bacon, potatoes, and bread, supplemented in the spring and summer by green vegetables and fruit, were the main sources of his nourishment. Miss Maud Davies, in her informative book on the English village, states that in the middle of the nineteenth century 'it was the custom for working men to take out with them a small loaf and a large onion for their dinners, never meat or cheese. Breakfast and supper generally consisted of home-grown potatoes with a little of something to flavour it.'¹

But unsatisfactory as were the conditions obtaining in an English agricultural village such as I am describing between the years 1860 and 1880, they were an improvement upon those which prevailed half a century earlier. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there began for the agricultural labourer a period of misery and privation such as had not been witnessed at any period since the Black Death in the fourteenth century. Miss Davies states that about 1801 in Wilts and Somerset 'men would go about with a piece of sacking tied round their necks, with holes for their arms and legs, as sole clothing. The people would feed on acorns or anything they could obtain. So high was the price of corn that a man could carry a guinea's worth of bread on his head.'²

The economic conditions prevailing towards the end of the nineteenth century were not so favourable to the landlord and the farmer as they had been when the price of corn was much higher;

¹ Maud Davies, *Life in an English Village*, p. 94.

² *Ibid.* p. 77.

but the position of the labourer had nevertheless considerably improved. Food was cheaper; he had a little surer hold on his cottage; the constant call of the mining and industrial districts for young men had reduced the competition for employment on the land, and the chances of employment for aged workers had greatly increased. But in spite of these improvements there remained a poverty which was both severe and demoralizing. The labourer had settled down to a sullen acceptance of the world as he found it: his two highest ambitions were to win a hard crust by his labour and to avoid a pauper's grave. Economic fear had driven him to accept both the parson's religion and the squire's politics: he owned his soul only when he prayed. Life was still hard for him, and his one chance of earning the few additional shillings which would enable him to pay a debt, buy a piglet, or meet the rent of an allotment, was in the time of harvest when, from dawn to darkness, he swung a scythe or carried heavy corn.

Even more striking than the patient endurance of the farm worker, was the constant industry and careful planning of his wife. She had to practise a financial austerity such as British Chancellors of the Exchequer have long since forgotten. The expenditure of the family had to be kept within closely calculated limits, lest over-spending during one week should involve under-feeding throughout the next. Waste of any kind was almost unheard of; the worn clothes of the men and elder children were cut down and remade for those who were younger. The harvest ale was brewed at home, and wine was made from blackberries, red currants, coltsfoot, cowslip and dandelion flowers, rhubarb, elder berries, and the sloe with its sharp sour taste. Vinegar was made from clover flowers, mead from honey, furmety from wheat, and beer from herbs. I knew the locality of every crab-apple and sloe tree for miles around the village, and precisely the place where watercress or mushrooms might be expected. I used to search the hedgerows for herbs which were believed to possess healing qualities, and I knew exactly where the Trent would be likely to deposit some of the drifting timber which from time to time it brought down from the upper reaches.

I remember occasions, in my own family, of serious under-nourishment following illness, and I recall instances of unmerited poverty among neighbours that I can scarcely bear to write about. Do the thoroughly comfortable among the possessing classes of to-day wonder that some of the children of these ill-requited men

and women turned their backs for ever upon the complacent churches and the political parties that tolerated such conditions, and determined to dedicate their lives to the task of trying to create a new economic system which might make it possible for the workers of the land to have life a little more abundantly? The memory of the privations and the social indignities that I saw and experienced as a child still arouses in me an unabated resentment, and I am thankful that long before I knew the cause of and the possible remedies for the suffering around me, I hated the system which produced and defended it, with an intensity which has never diminished.

Most men to-day can look back to happy days of childhood; to games well played, and to times of joy and laughter. I have no such memories. The children of my day and status were born to work and privation, and their chances of recreation were small indeed. I never learned to dance or to play even the simplest of games, and I quickly and completely lost all desire for diversion of that kind. For farm lads, engaged at heavy labour for long hours on six days in each week, Sundays provided the only possible time when games might have been played and enjoyed; but there was no sun in their Sunday: the hours of that day of solemn respite from labour were devoted to seeking forgiveness for their sins!

Yet, although we small boys could not then count our blessings one by one, we were nevertheless better treated than were the boys of the previous generation. No longer were we forced to climb up and clean chimneys from the inside; and we were spared some of the more degrading forms of juvenile employment. 'So late as 1870,' says Professor Walker, 'children were employed in the brickyards in England, under strange taskmasters, at three and a half years of age. Account is given of a boy weighing fifty-two pounds, whose daily task covered fourteen miles; one-half of this with a load of clay weighing forty pounds upon his head.'¹ British employers managed somehow to tolerate these conditions, while at the same time believing that 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'²

Further particulars of this case are given in Professor Walker's book, *The Wages Question*. 'At the meeting of the Social Science Association in 1870, Mr. George Smith presented a lump of clay

¹ Professor F. A. Walker, *Political Economy*, 2nd edition, p. 262.

² Matthew xviii 6.

weighing forty-three pounds which, in a wet state, he had taken, a few days before, off the head of a child nine years of age, who had daily to walk twelve and a half miles in a brickyard, half the distance with such a burden. "The clay," said Mr. Smith, "was taken from the child, and the calculations made by me in the presence of both master and men."¹

The farmers who employed boy labour in my district were neither 'strange taskmasters,' nor were they consciously inconsiderate; they merely accepted without question the prevailing standards, just as they accepted all established things without question. The average British farmer is, or was, the unconscious slave of habit, and every new idea or suggested change in method had to fight its way through generations of undisturbed prejudice. He is satisfied with the old ways and methods. Overtaken and often surprised by modern inventions, but not greatly influenced by them, he nevertheless remains the essential unit of our greatest industry.

Nature, for example, has provided him 'free, gratis, and for nothing' with millions of industrious feathered labourers—black-birds, plovers, larks, thrushes, etc., which cleanse his fields by destroying slugs, leather-jackets, and myriads of insects; yet not only does he grudge these tireless allies the small wages of seed or fruit that they take; he ruthlessly destroys them and then complains bitterly because the slugs devour the lettuce in his garden.

I remember old John Marshall, the superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School in the village, giving me, when a boy, a striking instance of the coercive force of habit. It had been the practice of a local farmer to put his rams to the ewes at the same time that he sowed his winter wheat, and when an exceptionally wet season caused the sowing to be seriously delayed, he remained stubbornly loyal to his habit with the result that when spring came there were very few lambs. Farmers were for a long time most distrustful of the alleged advantages of agricultural machinery, and Lord Ernle records that a farmer who had bought a drill was mockingly asked by his neighbour 'when he was going to sow pepper from a pepper-caster.'²

I have myself known farmers who would not put eggs under a broody hen unless the moon was waxing towards full, and village life was influenced, if not governed, by foolish, although perhaps

¹ Walker, *The Wages Question*, p. 52.

² Lord Ernle, *English Farming Past and Present*, p. 357.

not harmful superstitions. For example, to bring into the house a sprig of hawthorn blossom was to bring in bad luck. Knives should never be crossed, nor boots put on a table for the same reason. To see a single magpie was an omen of ill-luck, and when the first lamb of the season was seen, or the song of the cuckoo first heard, it was considered prudent to turn over, and spit upon, whatever coppers might be in your pocket, and at the same time, wish silently for what you most desired. To rub upon wood an itching palm 'was sure to come good,' and it was lucky to wear some new garment on Easter Sunday. No one voluntarily walked under a ladder, and every family arranged that something should be brought into the house on New Year's morning, before anything left it.

The long bleak nights and the bitterly cold days of winter were generally feared, and I shall remember as long as I live the early morning agony of trying to force into hard and rain-sodden boots feet that were swollen and inflamed with chilblains. One prescribed way of 'curing' this winter affliction was to run with bare feet on the heated floors (they were too hot for walking) of neighbouring malt kilns. The results never justified the exercise, but it was great fun.

When the River Trent overflowed its banks, and invaded the village streets and the low-lying cottages, we boys were greatly excited. Some of the cottages had temporarily to be abandoned, and their inhabitants accommodated in the more favourably situated but already crowded homes of their neighbours. When the waters subsided the cottages always presented a miserable appearance, and sickness quickly followed. On many occasions I had to wade through flood water on my way home from work, and although in daylight and in the company of other boys this would not have been an unwelcome adventure, I greatly dreaded it when alone in the dark.

We had, also, one or two recognized poachers in the village who had the secret admiration of most of the boys. Poaching was a dangerous but attractive sport. Its glories were enshrined in rural song and story, and there were few boys who did not know how to make and set a snare. To be sent to prison for poaching involved no moral obliquity in our minds, and every farm lad, as he followed the plough, lustily sang that poaching was his 'delight, on a shining night, in the season of the year.'

When I try to recall my early impressions of experiences such as these I remember chiefly a sense of great loneliness, for very few

of the adult men and women whom I knew either encouraged, or sympathized with, the embarrassing questionings of quick-minded growing boys, whose attempts to get information were far too frequently suppressed in the name of convention or of ignorance. But such treatment does not stifle a boy's thoughts, and the word 'why' was perhaps too persistently on my lips. I am sometimes tempted to believe that in spite of a slowness of mind and less nimble resourcefulness, the country-bred lad has a finer and steadier mentality than the boy whose school of life is the city streets; for before his eyes is a picture of stern reality, rather than the passing of a shadow on a screen.

Such social life as existed in the village was for the most part provided by the public-houses and the various places of worship. There were five of the former, and, in addition to the fine old parish church, there were chapels of the Baptist, Wesleyan, and Primitive Methodist communions. The people of the village did not, however, deprive themselves of the delights of sectarian disputation. The place where the Primitive Methodists held their services was known as the 'Ranters' Chapel,' and when at the rather low-lying Baptist Chapel, we used one of the hymns of the 'Jubilee Singers,' containing a line which said 'There's fire among the Methodists,' it was resented as offensive. Soon afterwards a flood invaded the Baptist Chapel, and the Wesleyan boys retaliated by singing the hymn in the streets, having changed the offending line to 'There's water among the Baptists.'

There was at that time no reading-room or library in the village, but well-thumbed books and periodicals were borrowed and newspapers passed from hand to hand. My own reading began with the much criticized 'penny dreadful' literature of the period, and, later, when I could spare a penny, I purchased the *Boys of England* and the *Young Men of Great Britain*. Much has been written concerning the type of reading material then provided for boys, but I have never joined in the criticisms; it was through such questionable literature that I acquired the habit of reading.

The time available for reading was, however, very restricted. Most of the elder people sought their beds by nine o'clock, and they liked their children to be asleep before that hour. Moreover, too much leisure would not have had their approval. They had strong Puritanical prejudices, and they whole-heartedly believed that 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' They looked for guidance to the past, and were promptly suspicious of

new ideas. They did not 'hold with' anything which disturbed an ancient custom or belief. They were of the same spiritual temper as those who, a few miles away, and centuries earlier, had assembled in the barn at Scrooby Manor, where William Brewster and his neighbours prepared their minds and plans for the sailing of the *Mayflower*.

The intellectual torpor of an English village sixty years ago may be illustrated by the fact that until I left the one in which I was born I never saw a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or any of the works of Charles Dickens, and I never heard any one mention the names of Lincoln, Wilberforce, or Lloyd Garrison. But many precious pennies were coaxed from my usually empty pocket for the needs of missionaries to the 'heathen.'

The village was not, however, without its own subdued and simple social life. The anniversary celebrations of the various Sunday Schools were the public occasions that made the greatest appeal to the children; and at Whitsuntide the annual procession through the village of the members of the Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society was looked forward to with almost equal pleasure by the elders. Headed by the village brass band, the members of the Order, in full regalia, marched to the parish church, and afterwards dined together in a tent erected in the courtyard of one of the village inns.

One of the farmers by whom I was employed had continued the ancient and genial practice of giving a 'harvest supper,' when he and his wife entertained to a friendly and substantial meal the labourers and their wives who had been employed during the harvest period. I have always regretted that the simple hospitality thus provided was not more generally extended by farmers to their employees. These suppers cost very little, for most of the food consumed was grown on the farm, and they provided just that touch of neighbourly sympathy and goodwill which is too often missing in the relationships which exist between employer and employed. I remember also that the same farmer, who was himself far from being a rich man, never sent his men and boys home on Christmas Eve without a gift of a pair of fowls, or a duck for their Christmas table, and these welcome presents were all the more valued because they were always cheerfully given. The harvest celebrations of most of the farmers were of a simpler and cheaper nature. When the last load of corn had been tied upon the wagon it was decorated with green boughs taken from the trees, and the



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farm lads were hoisted to the top of the load, from which position they joyously shouted themselves hoarse as the wagon proceeded through the village to the farm.

After the corn had been taken from the fields the wives of the labourers and their children were allowed to go over them and pick up such ears of corn as had been left behind. I have very pleasant memories of these gleaning parties; but the weight of the gathered corn and straw, which had to be carried home on our heads each night, put a heavy strain upon my mother, my sisters, and myself. The corn so gleaned was usually threshed with a flail, which I was taught to use; but it was a tricky and even dangerous instrument in the hands of a beginner, and a stupid pupil had sometimes to endure the humiliation of having the kitchen iron cooking-pot put upside down over his head for its much needed protection. When the threshing was finished the wheat was sent to the local windmill to be ground into flour for bread: while the barley, oats, peas, and beans were fed to the cottage pig.

The River Trent was an unfailing source of interest to the villagers, and the holm of several hundred acres which lay by its side gave to me my first illustration of the advantages of public or co-operative ownership of land. A portion of this land was owned by the parish, and the rents derived from it kept the local rates at an enviably low level. The river was much frequented by anglers, native and imported, and stories of fabulous catches of fish, which all the disciples of Izaak Walton love to tell, were passed from tongue to tongue.

De cat-fish call and de sturgeon say,
 'Yonder is a fishin' man a-coming dis way;
 And he'll try to git you on his line,
 And he'll tell de folks you wuz six foot nine.'
 Den de sturgeon say, 'Let's swim up higher,
 We don't want ter 'sociate wid no sich liar.'

The village blacksmith's shop was the most popular resort for those who lived to gossip, but who did not go to the public-houses, and there, especially in the evenings, men would meet and talk to the accompanying music of the anvil, the roar of the bellows, and the magic of the upward-flying sparks. The craft of the blacksmith was greatly esteemed: his reputation had descended to him from ancient times: 'Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his

work.’¹ I have the happiest memories of the many informing conversations that I listened to in that village forum. Among those present there was usually someone with a gift for imparting useful information. Such general news as reached the village would be discussed; but the conversation for the most part had reference to the prices of cattle, pigs, poultry, and dairy produce at the weekly market. The prospects for the young crops, the possibilities of drought or, if there had been rain, of the Trent overflowing its banks and invading the low-lying fields and village streets, would be carefully estimated; there would be news of a sick neighbour, or comment on what the parson in his Sunday sermon had said concerning some interesting aspect of religion or of life. The blacksmith’s shop was, in fact, the brightest, warmest, and most attractive place in the village. The talk was neighbourly and informative, social and practical, rather than remote or speculative, and the place had a special attraction for the boys from the farms, for they could always be sure of a few pennies for a cast horse-shoe which they had been lucky enough to find in the fields. I spent many profitable hours listening to the wisdom of those village Hampdens, and I did not count one of them wasted. Among the subjects constantly discussed were the trial and sentence of the claimant, Sir Roger Tichborne, and the career and execution of Charles Peace. Among politicians, ‘Dizzy’ was criticized, and ‘owd Gladstone’ was exalted.

Nearly every labourer in the village was a member of the local Lodge of the Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society, known as ‘the Club,’ of which the blacksmith was the secretary. The contributions of sixpence per week were paid monthly, and each week’s portion of the sum required was thriftily separated from the current expenditure in readiness for necessary payments. The benefits of ‘the Club,’ even though small in amount, gave real consolation, for the services of the doctor with ten shillings per week during sickness, together with the assurance that in the case of death there would be ten pounds available for expenses, gave to the labourer and his wife some touch of that peace that passeth bourgeois understanding. There was little of the distrust of club doctors which I afterwards found existed in the towns. The doctor was the neighbour and friend of everybody; he called every man by his Christian name and, enjoying the full confidence of his patients, he served them with skill and a cheerful devotion. Mem-

¹ Isaiah liv 16.

bership of 'the Club' was also regarded as a certificate of character, and those who neglected or obstinately refused to join it were regarded as improvident and unworthy. The Club was the chief welfare organization of the village, and it helped to keep the grim old wolf of want from many a poor man's door. The nation owes a deep debt of gratitude to the thousands of far-seeing working men who devoted their leisure to the development and conduct of the great Friendly Society movement, which has been an unfailing source of help and consolation to millions of families in the dark hours of sickness and bereavement.

I became a member of the juvenile section of 'the Club' when I was fourteen years of age; at eighteen I graduated naturally to the adult organization. Some years later, when I had become a regular town dweller, I joined the Hearts of Oak Friendly Society, of which I am still a member. I have therefore had more than fifty years' experience as a member of a friendly society and, although I do not remember ever having drawn anything from its funds, I have been comforted by the knowledge that such help would be available in case of need.

The village also enjoyed the questionable advantages of a well-developed neighbourliness. Anybody's business was treated as though it were everybody's business. There was far less privacy for a man's personal affairs in this small hamlet of a few hundred souls than in the busy life of a crowded city. His coming and going, his rising and resting, the affairs of his bed and board, were canvassed and distorted until they bore only a remote resemblance to the facts. The vicar's wife was reported as having said on one of her visits to an old parishioner: 'Ah, Mrs. Smith, one half of the world is ignorant of how the other half lives,' to which Mrs. Smith made the truthful reply: 'Not in this village they aren't, ma'am.' Irresponsible gossip is indeed one of the major afflictions of village life, for the news-carrying, rumour-repeating, tale-telling woman spreads slander and bears false witness against her neighbour, not because she has any malicious intention, but because she has acquired a foolish and pernicious habit. In this respect there is perhaps little to choose between men and women. An item of news, a story, or a casual rumour is very rarely turned away from a man's door: rather is it asked to enter and to make itself at home. And he seldom sends it forth on its journey without providing it with a new hat and a stick.

The public-houses had also their accepted place among the social

amenities of the place, and in them a few of the farm labourers and lonely young men of the village too frequently sought warmth, recreation, and fellowship. Some of those who habitually visited these places drank far more alcohol than was good for them, or than they could afford to buy, and I can remember one or two cases of chronic over-drinking, involving not only loss of health and self-respect, but also the slow descent into poverty and pauperism. One explanation of this harmful habit was that the public-house offered to the men back from the lonely fields and hedgerows the human fellowship for which their souls craved, and if some of them abused the opportunities that the public-houses afforded, and went either slowly, or headlong, to the devil, it was because the devil alone appeared to want them.

Social life for the children was in great part provided by the various Sunday schools, at which the teachers were farm labourers, village shop-keepers, or their wives and sisters. These instructors of village youth had no claim to learning in the subjects they taught, nor had they knowledge of the problems of the wider world which existed beyond the boundaries of their own parish; but from their example and the homely wisdom of their teaching I learned a portion of the alphabet of duty and personal responsibility. As a junior member of the choir of the Baptist chapel I was said to possess an acceptable singing voice, and for several years, on Christmas Eve, I went the round of our own and neighbouring villages with a properly trained company of 'Christmas Singers,' drawn from the local religious bodies. I thought it great fun to be out all night calling upon 'Christians' to 'awake' and 'salute the happy morn'; but the disturbed sleepers probably did not share my enthusiasm, for their gifts were too small to have come from really thankful hearts.

The village church was a dignified and beautiful structure with a peal of five fine bells and a clock in its tower which could be seen, and heard, throughout the neighbourhood. Dissenters and churchmen alike were proud of it as the historic centre of their parish. But that not all the villagers attended its services was proved by the existence of three nonconformist chapels, in which the average labourer felt spiritually more at home. These drab little conventicles were run by men of their own class and calling; the sermons to be heard in them were robust and sincere; the doctrine taught was orthodox and colourful, with intermingling

threats of punishment for the unrepentant, and comforting promises of forgiveness for those with contrite hearts.

There is a dreadful hell,
With everlasting pains;
There sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains.¹

The singing was invariably hearty, and the spirit of fellowship was fresh and healing. The labourer felt that in these chapels he could worship in his own way, among his own people, and without the suspicion that he was being patronized or overlooked. He was distinctly parson-shy.

The vicar of the parish was a kindly, well-meaning man, and the conscientious performance of his duties was entirely commendable, but to the working people he was as one who dwelt apart. They treated him with respect, saluted him as he passed, but they did not 'go gladly' to the House of the Lord in which he ministered. Just how this distrust of church and parson arose it is now futile to inquire, but that it existed is beyond question. The English village church at that time was for the most part a tragedy of missed opportunities. It might have gathered to itself the whole community 'as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,' but it did not do so. The parson was as a rule the only educated man in the parish, and if he had preached to the poor instead of preaching at them he might have made himself the dominant spiritual influence in their lives. And that he failed to do this was probably due to the traditions of his class and calling rather than to his own shortcomings. The labourers regarded him as belonging to a different social world from that in which they lived; his message was not for the likes of them. His teaching may have been correct and well-informed; but it was austere and condescending—the voice of the governing class—whereas what the peasant desired was a simple and friendly interpretation of the New Testament, not the social prejudices of the high-born, the parson, and the squire.

It should not, however, be assumed that the nonconformist bodies were entirely free from social snobbery, or that their leading members regarded the poor as their equals. The following copy of a possibly facetious advertisement, selected from some old papers and sent to the *Sunday Times*, 14th June 1931, by Mr. Francis E. Robinson of Stanmore, Middlesex, illustrates this attitude very well.

¹ Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs for Children*.

'TOWN LIFE

'Wanted for a sober family, by the Profane denominated Methodists; a man of light weight, who fears the Lord and can drive a pair of horses, he must occasionally wait at Table, join in Household Prayer, look after the Horses and read a chapter in the Bible, he must (God willing) rise at seven in the morning, obey his Master and Mistress in all lawful commands; if he can dress hair, sing hymns and play at Cribbage the more agreeable.

'N.B. He must not be too familiar with the Maid Servants of the House, lest the flesh should rebel against the spirit, and he should be induced to walk in the thorny paths of the wicked.

'Wages fifteen guineas a year.'

The instruction given at the village church school, during the short time that I attended it, was of course helpful, but it was far inferior to that which children of the present day enjoy. The idea that the children of the workers should be educated for the nation's good had not at that time been widely accepted. The general attitude towards such education was that voiced by the pious Hannah More, who 'wished the poor to be able to read their Bibles, and to be qualified for domestic duties, but not to write or be enabled to read Tom Paine, or to be encouraged to rise above their station.'¹ This view persisted long after I had left the village, for I remember that, when as a young man I was on a visit to my parents, I heard the vicar, who had called upon a sick member of my family, tell my mother that the education of the poor should have been restricted to a curriculum sufficient to have enabled them to read the New Testament and the Church Collects, with as much writing as would empower them to sign their names and communicate with the members of their family. He was not an unkindly man, but he represented a type then common in his Church. Was not the candidate for confirmation called upon humbly 'to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters . . . and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me'?

Among the influences which gave to the village something of an independent and radical tone, were three or four small workshops in which baskets were made. These were the political

¹ Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. i, p. 111.

centres of the place, and those employed in them were Liberals and Radicals to a man. Some of them were local preachers, Sunday-school teachers, and choir-leaders, and their work was frequently accompanied by the singing of favourite hymns and ballads. I spent many profitable hours in listening to their talk, and they counted among the influences which later turned my mind towards political and social ideas.

When at twelve years of age I had to leave the parental home and face life on my own account, I stood for hire in the marketplace at Newark-on-Trent, at the Michaelmas Fair in the year 1877, when I was engaged as an indoor servant by a farmer named Doncaster, who lived at the village of Caunton near Southwell. It was the custom, at the 'hirings' in those days, to seal the bargain by the gift of a piece of money known as a 'fastening penny,' and the sum that 'fastened' me was a silver shilling. The wage paid to me for a year's work was, I think, five pounds, but it may have been less. The farmer to whom I thus became bound was probably neither better nor worse than his class; but to a child away from home for the first time he and his mother appeared to be both unsympathetic and harsh. I cannot remember that they ever took the slightest interest in either myself or an older boy about the farm. We were regarded merely as intelligent working animals, destined to remain with them for an appointed time, after which other unhappy boys would take our place. The food was sufficient, but terribly monotonous, and I yearned for a change from the invariable daily rations of bread and boiled fat bacon which we took with us into the fields. I learned, however, even at that early period of my life, that there is usually a way of deliverance from the minor difficulties of life, and this particular horror was frequently overcome by 'swopping' my meal of bread and bacon with the ploughman, whose wife had thoughtfully made an acceptable 'pasty' in preparation for the bargain. When the time came for my departure I went away with a thankful heart to try my luck in some other place. The vicar of Caunton at the time that I was there was Canon (afterwards Dean) Hole, the well-known authority on rose-growing. He was a big, fresh-coloured man and, I believe, a fine preacher, but although I 'sat under him' every Sunday the only impression that I retain of him is that of an austere and unapproachable personality: a forbidding judge, rather than a friendly pastor. Politically, of course, he was a Tory of the Tories.

My next situation was at the inn at Hazleford Ferry on the River Trent between Newark and Nottingham, where I was an amalgam of groom, potman, and ferryman. The ferry was within driving distance of Nottingham, and visitors to the inn gave to me my first contact with the city mind. I also learned how to manage a boat, to take charge of horses, cattle, and sheep, and to meet the many requirements of domestic service. It was a good situation, and I remember my experiences while there with pleasure and gratitude. I cannot remember that during this period I read anything, or that I ever saw a book; but my thoughts were gradually turned towards the life of the big cities about which I heard with an ever-increasing interest.

I should not like to end the record of the earliest working years of my life without saying with sincerity and deep thankfulness that I was most fortunate in the character of the many working men in whose company my young days were spent. Looking back on the years when I worked with them in the stables and the fields, through long and lonely days, and under all sorts of conditions, I cannot remember anything that reflects the least discredit upon them. They were untaught, clean-living, simple-hearted men of singular purity of character, with an inborn sense of decency and of reverence for the innocence of a child's mind. They were among the best men I have ever known, and, for the example of their lives, for their rich yet homely wisdom, derived from their daily contact with the growing corn, the trees, and the sweet-smelling earth, and for all that they taught me, I remember them with pride and gratitude. 'All these put their trust in their hands: and each becometh wise in his own work. Without these shall no city be inhabited, and men shall not sojourn nor walk up and down therein. They shall not be sought for in the council of the people, and in the assembly they shall not mount on high; they shall not sit on the seat of the judge, and they shall not understand the covenant of judgment: neither shall they declare instruction and judgment; and where parables are they shall not be found. *But they will maintain the fabric of the world: and in the handiwork of their craft is their prayer.*'¹

¹ Ecclesiasticus xxxviii 31-4.

CHAPTER II

EARLY STRUGGLES

When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something.

ROBERT BROWNING.

WHEN I left Hazleford Ferry, after staying there for about a year, I had my first experience of the misery associated with prolonged unemployment. The wages that I had received were barely sufficient to pay for necessary articles of clothing, some of which had been obtained on credit until the end of the year, when what I had earned was paid. I had, in addition, about two pounds saved from gratuities received as groom or ostler, and this sum constituted my total cash reserve. I cannot remember why I did not again stand for hire as a farm worker in the market-place at Newark; but I was then at the difficult age when I was neither small boy nor full-grown youth, and I had probably already decided to break away from an occupation which rewarded those who followed it with unbroken toil, chronic poverty and, at the end, the workhouse. My elder brother had earlier abandoned village life to become an engine cleaner on the London and North-Western Railway at Crewe, and had my parents not regarded this as a dangerous occupation I might also have sought work at the same place.

A few young men from the village had emigrated to Australia, and it was only the distress that a decision to leave England would have caused my mother that prevented me from following them. Therefore, while waiting for the chance of regular employment, I did odd jobs in the village, which varied from casual work on the farms to acting as a bricklayer's labourer. I wrote many letters to employers who had advertised for help such as I thought that I could give, but no door of opportunity would open. The day came, however, when I determined to risk everything, and one morning at daybreak I walked the eight miles to Newark-on-Trent, spent the greater part of two precious shillings on a railway ticket to Nottingham, where I called upon several of those who had advertised for help, and the same day I engaged myself as a potboy

at a public-house which was situated on the site now occupied by the new Exchange Buildings. Need compelled me to take the first job that I could find, but I did not pretend to like the kind of start I had to make. The public-house was a small one-roomed affair, with a living room in the basement, and sleeping rooms on the two upper storeys; it was much frequented by salesmen from the adjacent market, by betting men, and by women whose habits of life were not beyond reproach. During the few months that I remained there I saw and heard much that no boy should be permitted to see and hear, and only the fear of another period of unemployment prevented me from at once leaving a place that I both hated and feared.

The situation had, however, one compensating advantage. It gave me a few free hours on Sunday afternoons, which I usually spent at Lenton, one of the suburbs of Nottingham, then a detached village, where Mrs. Kirk, in whose employment I had been at Hazleford Ferry, had become the tenant of the 'Three Wheat Sheaves Inn. Mrs. Kirk was a short, stout, florid woman, who had an abominable temper and a very kind heart. For days on end she would nag and scold, complain and threaten, until life with her became almost unbearable. But she had frequent outbreaks of kindly and almost motherly consideration. While in her service my life was divided into periods when nothing that I could do pleased her, and other periods when I could do nothing wrong. On her bad days she would accuse me of having faults of character, which often made me fear that I had been born with a depraved nature. During one of her storms of temper she wrote to my parents complaining of my 'disobedience and idleness,' asserted that I had only 'cleaned out and milked two cows with a good deal of scolding,' that I was 'very untruthful,' and was not asked to begin work before 'half-past six o'clock in a morning.' This letter, dated 30th November 1878, when I was thirteen years of age, is before me as I write. It was written a long time ago, and I cannot be certain that there was no truth in these complaints, but that my alleged faults were grossly exaggerated I have not the least doubt. 'Disobedient,' and even 'untruthful,' I may have been; but I am convinced that the charge of 'idleness' had no foundation in fact; and I am equally sure that the fiery old lady repented having written the letter long before it reached its destination. How little she herself believed in these charges was shown by the fact that when I visited her at Lenton she persuaded

me to leave the public-house where I was employed, and again enter her service as a 'jack of all trades' at the inn, and on the small farm attached to it.

This very temperamental employer had a humorous way of doing kindly things: she would come behind me when seated at the table and, without a word of complaint or warning, would soundly box my ears, or give me some 'thimble-pie,' consisting of hard taps on the head with her thimbled finger, and then present me with a new shirt or other garment, which she had made for me with her own hands. She was the only employer, in whose house I lived, who ever took the slightest personal interest in me, and I remember her with respect and gratitude.

The breaking point came as a result of one of the storms of temper to which I have alluded, and on the completion of the year for which I had been engaged, the arrangement was not renewed. After a further period of unemployment I again got work at a public-house in the centre of the city; but, as it still exists, I will merely say that I loathed every hour that I spent there, and it was not long before the well-known weary and anxious days of unemployment had once more to be faced. My next job was at a public-house, the character of which was not strikingly different from the one that I had left, and I leave it unnamed for the same reason.

I became deeply depressed as a result of these experiences, because it appeared that the only doors that would open for me were those belonging to places which I both hated and feared, and I have never been able to overcome the loathing that I then acquired for the occupation which the grim necessities of my youth compelled me to follow. I count it as almost miraculous that I escaped from such experiences without a more serious contamination of both mind and body than actually occurred. During those years of service in drinking places I must have tasted beer, because I do not think that I could easily have avoided doing so; but I no longer recall what it was like, and the detestation of the liquor trade which I then developed was so intense that I have never since voluntarily entered a public-house in this country. My gratitude for the experience I gained in licensed houses is limited to the fact that it gave me both the desire and the strength to avoid them.

One of the major blessings of my life has been that since I was twenty-three years of age I have been privileged to earn my bread by work which, had I been economically free to choose my occupation, I should have wished to do as a voluntary worker. As

Carlyle said: 'Blessed is he who has found his work; let him seek no other blessedness.'

The last of the situations alluded to had, however, one advantage which probably altered the whole course of my life. It not only gave me freedom on two or three nights in each week, but also on Sunday afternoons and evenings. The wages paid were fourteen shillings per week, and for a time I lived in a cheap lodging-house, where I had part of a bed in a crowded and ill-ventilated room. I bought my own food, which was generally eaten in the stable, and such clothes as I could afford to buy were secondhand, and obtained from the cheapest market. I cannot dwell upon the conditions associated with the occupation I followed, beyond saying that, in such an environment, a lonely boy is exposed to unnamable dangers, and that I was fortunate in that, just in time, I got away from both the place and the calling.

It was perhaps inevitable that a homeless lad, with free Sunday evenings on his hands, should be drawn to the market-place, which had become a well-established meeting place for young people, and I there came into contact with inducements which quickly and permanently changed my whole outlook upon life. The great market-place was the recognized forum of the itinerant speaker and preacher, and to these I was irresistibly drawn. I cannot recall that up to this time I had read a book since, as a boy, I had left my native village; for a potboy's working hours began early in the morning, and continued until long after he should have been in bed. There was thus no time for reading, nor was there any reading material available. My brain at this period was probably in a starved condition, for it absorbed greedily every word and idea without discrimination, much as a dry sponge absorbs whatever moisture it touches. I must have listened, during scores of hours, to speakers whose message would vary from the traditional orthodoxy of 'Jimmy Dupe,' a well-known preaching butcher, to the disturbing criticism of the outspoken secularist. I cannot assume that I was then able to separate facts from theories, to check statements and discount exaggerations, or to isolate truths and half-truths from much that was probably wholly false; my mind gorged itself on what it found, and the result must have been confusion.

This experience also brought to me anguish of an entirely new kind. I had been brought up to believe that every word of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelations, was beyond all question true,

and that I saw it exactly as it had come from the awful mouth of God Himself. That any sane person should question this had never entered into my mind, although I had heard the 'infidel' spoken of as a dreadful abnormality. And here I heard an unbeliever speak, and I met him face to face. Nothing had been more continuously impressed upon me as a child than that he who rejected even one jot or tittle of the Bible story was a doomed soul, for God had sworn to 'take away his portion out of the book of life.' The 'infidel' of my imagination was a willing and vicious son of Satan, whose diabolical work upon the earth he joyfully engaged himself to do, and dramatic stories of the death-bed agonies and repentances of unbelievers were, at that time, told to children from their earliest years. My astonishment when I first saw and heard an 'unbeliever' was therefore intense. There was nothing abnormal about him. He wore a black frock-coat, and he looked as much like a highly virtuous elder of a nonconformist chapel as any man I had ever seen. Upon inquiry I learned that he was a most respectable and respected citizen of the town, a confectioner by trade, a leader in the Co-operative Movement, a Liberal in politics and, in religious opinion, an advanced Unitarian. He was also one of the best open-air speakers I have ever heard and, from him and other lecturers and preachers, I got my first introduction to a new conception of life, and of man's earthly duties and responsibilities.

As I remember the teaching that then most impressed me, it was that the whole duty of man did not consist in passing on his troubles to an all-personal God, whose throne was to be stormed by shocks of prayer until He took them upon Himself. Man had to work as well as pray. He could, and he should, become an effective factor in the shaping of his own destiny, and he would honour God in the proportion that he ceased to think of himself as the helpless tool of an Almighty and Imperious Will, and regarded himself as, in some infinitesimal degree, associated with God the Creator in the tremendous business of running the universe.

The effect of the impact upon my mind of these strange and disturbing ideas was to impose upon me the most acute inward strife and spiritual loneliness. Only those who have had to pass through that dark valley of disillusionment can understand the desolation of the journey. The cheaper kind of religious advocate loves to assert that the doubter enjoys his scepticism, because he is wilfully wicked and deceitful of heart. How little these shallow preachers know of the spiritual anxieties and perplexities, the

temporary accommodations and renunciations, the hopeful searchings and the reluctant partings, that the sceptic experiences before he finds peace in a new and more satisfactory theory of life. A disturbed faith, or an uprooted conviction, is much like the mandrake which is said to wail when it is uprooted. The intolerant religious mind is more cruel in this matter than in almost any other. It frequently acts as though it loved to hurt afresh those who are already wounded. It sees a lonely and troubled soul earnestly searching for the truth and an abiding peace, and it stabs him viciously as he passes. He dare not ask for guidance or sympathy because he is so rarely understood, and because the ever-ready answer to his appeal for assistance is that 'he hath a devil.' 'While we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his opinions "evangelical," or "latitudinarian and pantheistic," "Anglican and supercilious," that man in his solitude is perhaps shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word and do the difficult deed.'¹

Only those who were nurtured in the austere and unbending religious doctrines taught in an English agricultural village in the middle of the last century, can appreciate the surprised horror with which I first heard those doctrines assailed as partly, or wholly, untrue and harmful. I did not part with my spiritual inheritance either lightly or quickly: but the mind of youth is very resilient, quick to forget, and swift to accommodate itself to new visions and demands. Consequently, newer interpretations of the meaning of life gradually displaced those on which I had been reared; and I began half-unconsciously to think about religion as progressive in meaning and purpose, rather than as an unchangeable revelation of an age long past.

It was at one of the meetings held in the great market-place at Nottingham that, in the year 1881, I first heard of the name and the fame of Charles Bradlaugh. The controversy which had arisen over the question of his claim to be admitted to Parliament had made his name a household word throughout the country, and when it was announced that he would shortly visit Nottingham I determined that I would try to see him and hear him speak. The meetings that he addressed were held on a Sunday in the old Alhambra Music Hall, in St. Mary's Gate, and I attended the one that was called for the afternoon. The subject of his lecture was

¹ George Eliot, *Janet's Repentance*.

Ireland. Bradlaugh was already speaking when I arrived, and I remember, as clearly as though it were only yesterday, the immediate and compelling impression made upon me by that extraordinary man. The impact of his personality reached me just at the moment when I was ready to respond to any plausible call to service, and my capitulation to his resounding appeal was immediate and enduring. I have never been so influenced by a human personality as I was by Charles Bradlaugh. The commanding strength, the massive head, the imposing stature, and the ringing eloquence of the man fascinated me, and from that hour until the day of his death, ten years later, I was one of the humblest but most devoted of his followers.

That does not mean, however, that I uncritically accepted all his opinions. On the contrary, there were both in his social and his metaphysical teaching barriers that I could not cross; but I had an unclouded belief in his sincerity and capacity, and in his absolute devotion to the truth. I was then an impressionable and inexperienced youth, with very little education, and I might quite easily have mistaken vehemence for character, and oratorical thunder for wisdom. I know now that my instinct was quite right. I knew Bradlaugh more intimately as I grew older, and my devotion to him increased with my experience. My judgment as to the intellectual and literary quality of his speeches was, in all probability, quite valueless; but that he was built on a bigger plan than any other man that I had ever met, I had not the least doubt—nor have I to this day. Taking him all in all—as man, as orator, as leader of unpopular causes, and as an incorruptible public figure, he was the most imposing human being that I have ever known, and I do not expect to look upon his like again. His energy on the platform was cyclonic, and his power to sway the emotions of a great audience had to be witnessed to be understood. There was nothing quite like it during that generation. I have seen strong men, under the storm of his passion, rise from their seats, and sometimes weep with emotion. Like a prodigal he threw away with both hands the energies of a precious life, and he died, exhausted, at the early age of fifty-seven. Fierce as a lion when angered by insult or injustice, he was as emotional as a child when touched by an unexpected kindness. He chose as the motto of his life the word ‘Thorough,’ and to his friends he came as near to realizing his own declared idea of what a man should be as it is given to but few men to achieve. It is now forty-five years since he died, but I hold his memory as one of my great possessions. ‘He was,’ as Augustine

Birrell pointed out shortly after his death, 'a brave man . . . into the fruits of whose labours others have entered.'

About this time I learned of the existence in Nottingham of a branch of the National Secular Society, of which Bradlaugh was the president, and I began to attend some of the meetings held under its auspices. My opinions on religious problems were, at this time, quite unsettled, but the meetings of the society afforded opportunities for information and discussion and, after some delay, I became one of its members. The main motive which prompted me to join the society was that by so doing I might be able to give some slight help to Bradlaugh in the fight that he was then waging for his right to take his seat in Parliament, from which, as I thought, he was being wrongfully excluded. In any case I gradually became associated with its work, and among the lecturers to whom I listened with eager attention, were Mrs. Annie Besant, Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, Mr. Charles Watts, Dr. Edward Aveling, and Mr. George William Foote. I also read greedily everything that appeared in Bradlaugh's weekly journal, the *National Reformer*, and all the pamphlets, magazines, or books, dealing with the modern interpretation of religion that I could procure.

My interest in the Bible was, in consequence, increased tenfold, and I made a real effort to understand its meaning in the light of the scholarship of the time. If, as the result of this study, it came to mean less to me as the infallible and inspired word of God, its significance as a human document containing the story of the religious evolution of the Jewish people, was immeasurably increased. The Bible was to me no longer a fetish to be worshipped without understanding; it became a precious record of a phase of human development, not to be accepted as scientifically true or as historically valid, but rich in its knowledge of the human heart and mind, and at the same time charged with the faults of conduct and character that belong to human nature. The Psalms and the story of Job, the works of the major prophets, and the whole of the New Testament, I read many times during that period of mental distress, and I continued for long afterwards to read them with an ever-increasing interest and understanding. Hard reading and anxious thinking gradually convinced me that many of the doctrines which as a child I had accepted as infallible truths, could not be retained, and that one of the greatest needs of the time was a statement of religious thought in terms which well-informed minds could accept. My own mind began slowly to accommodate itself to a new con-



CHARLES BRADLAUGH

ception of the religious life, but no immediate Damascus-like transition from the gloom of the old outlook to the radiant splendour of the new, came to me. The journey was slow, hard, and painful, and there were many backward, wistful glances over the old pathways.

So far as I can remember, the parting from the old moorings had no influence at all on my conduct as a human being. In my character there was neither retrogression nor improvement. I was not wayward beyond other youths, and I placed upon myself a sterner discipline than was obvious in the conduct of most of the orthodox young men whom I knew. I did not drink nor smoke, nor did I habitually steal, swear, or bear false witness against my fellow-men. My association with public-houses had filled me with an antipathy for them which prevented me from entering their doors, and the steady discipline of the educational curriculum that I had imposed upon myself left me without either the time or the taste for loose or vicious living.

On the other hand I was no more virtuous than many other young men whom I met as friends and fellow-students. They were for the most part clean both in mind and body, and their habits would have satisfied all but the sternest moralists. The young men of my native village were divided into two classes, those who went to church, and those who went to the public-house; and whenever I returned to it as a visitor, I was regarded as an eccentric because I persistently refused to enter either.

Among those whom I met at the meetings of the Nottingham Secular Society was Mr. John Roger Anderson of Beeston, who for nearly fifty years has been an active member of the Nottinghamshire County Council, and about whom I shall write later. I was associated with him and with several young people whom I had met as students, in the work of a local Temperance Society, which did not preach or scold, but which every Saturday night provided, in the middle of the town, a bright concert, cheap refreshments, and a short and friendly talk, for those who wanted to escape from the noise and the temptations of the crowded streets. It was a society run by young people for young people, and for some years it had a considerable place in my life. The entertainments were usually presided over by one of the notable citizens of the town, who encouraged us in the work we were trying to do, and I believe that those bright gatherings, which were held in the Friends' Meeting House in Friar Lane, were far more effective in keeping

young people away from alcoholic liquor than were the scolding admonitions of the older type of temperance advocate.

Among those who helped in the work of this society were several young men and women who belonged to the High Pavement Unitarian chapel and Sunday school, and I was easily persuaded to accompany them to both. As I have explained, although I had become a member of the National Secular Society, and no longer believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, in miracles, the biblical story of creation, or several other orthodox doctrines, I had arrived at no settled opinions concerning the mystery of life, or of the origin, nature, and government of the universe. Consequently, the Unitarian chapel with its scholarly approach to these great problems, with its tolerance for those of other faiths, and with its record as a progressive force in the civic life of the town, made a quick and strong appeal to me, and I entered into its gates with thanksgiving. The chapel had conducted a pioneer day school for more than a century; it had trained many who had become distinguished citizens, and, under capable and wide-minded ministers such as the Rev. R. A. Armstrong and the late Rev. James Harwood, it stood for all that was best in the civic and religious life of the period.

The Sunday school attached to the chapel had classes for young men and women, as well as for children, and I attended the senior class of young men with great pleasure and advantage. The morning class was led by the late Mr. John Kentish-Wright, a university graduate, who was a highly respected local solicitor, and a man of wide reading and scholarly mind. Mr. George Bryan, afterwards the secretary of the Mechanics' Institution, took the afternoon class, and his knowledge of the world and of business life was helpful to us all. Among the books to which we gave detailed study were Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (with Mignet as a companion textbook), Emerson's *English Traits*, Estlin Carpenter on the New Testament, and other books which gave us both pleasure and instruction.

My association with the Unitarian chapel and school formed the happiest experience of my young life. There was no test of creed. We were not asked to say what, or how much, we believed; and we were encouraged to deal frankly with our teachers and colleagues when difficulties of conscience and belief arose. I had not gone to the school under false pretences. The class leaders, the superintendent of the school, and the minister of the chapel,

were well aware of the spiritual crisis through which I was passing, and they all welcomed me with a cordiality and a sympathy which was both gracious and consoling, and it seemed for a time as though I had found a new and happy spiritual home. My dearest friendships were formed within its walls, and it has a revered place in my memories.

I cannot assume that my contributions to the discussions that were encouraged were always either modest or wise; but I know that they were sincere, and that they were meant to be helpful. I am also certain that I was by no means the most advanced in opinion among the young men who attended and took part in them, and I was most careful not to misuse the hospitality so generously given to me, nor to be disloyal to the recognized purpose of the communion. In view of the later developments of my mind, it is probable that Unitarianism would not have held me permanently; but it was a temporary, and deeply valued, house of refuge, and it helped me to a view of the religious life which brought a provisional comfort to my troubled mind.

The good things of life are often very transient, and this pleasant experience was far too good to last. In due course I received a formal letter from the school authorities which said that they had noticed a dangerous growth of advanced opinion and an increasing spiritual unrest among the young men of the school, which they attributed to my influence, and they desired that I should no longer attend it. No intimation had reached me that these anxieties prevailed, and no opportunity was afforded to me to give any personal explanation, or assurance that might have removed them. I was abruptly told to keep away. This exclusion from their religious fellowship took place at a time when most young men of intelligence and character were questioning the validity of inherited creeds and institutions, and were feeling their way towards new appreciations of both the religious and the political life, and those whose views I was assumed to be adversely influencing were not only young men of fine quality and of unquestionable character, but all of them were better educated than myself, and their influence over me was assuredly greater than any that I could have had over them. I carefully searched my memory to see if I could discover whether I had, even unintentionally, transgressed against the objects and temper of the school, and I convinced myself that my sole indiscretion had been that at a meeting of the chapel Literary Society, influenced perhaps by local patriotism rather than by literary

discrimination, I had contested the view expressed by one of the chapel notables that Coleridge was a greater poet than Byron.

My affection for the High Pavement chapel was such that I found it difficult to associate its long tradition of tolerance with the inconsiderate action of its authorities in regard to myself. Their proscription came to me as an unexpected and shattering blow; I was almost stunned with grief, but I was too proud in spirit to humble myself before them, or even to complain; and I have kept silent respecting the incident until the present time. Because it not only constituted one of my greatest sorrows, but altered more than any incident in my life the whole course of my career, I do not feel that I can rightly omit any reference to it in this record.

It was for me the parting of the ways. After weeks of silent grief, during which I had friendly and emotional interviews with the late Mr. John Crosby Warren, the superintendent of the school, and with the late Rev. James Harwood, the minister of the chapel, the sense of the integrity of my own personality caused me silently to retreat into the sure and quiet comfort of my own soul. My conscience was quite clear. There had been nothing in my conduct that required from me either repentance or apology. They had expelled me from their fellowship. I was a religious outcast; an Ishmael. Very well. My relationship to organized Christianity had been decided for me, and I had henceforth to fight my spiritual battle alone. I have tried to do so. I sought for inspiration in other places, and what I sought I found in satisfying abundance.

CHAPTER III

UNEMPLOYMENT; STUDY AND RESEARCH

Play no tricks upon thy soul, O man!
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

WHEN my connection with the employer last referred to came to an end there began for me the worst experience of unemployment and privation of my life. I got a temporary job at yet another public-house kept by a dog-fancier, who also had some local reputation as a boxer, and then there began once more the heart-breaking effort to sell labour which nobody wanted. The weeks, and months, passed by, but no door of opportunity would open, and intense spiritual depression was added to physical need. My clothes became so worn and shabby that I avoided places, such as the Saturday night temperance meetings, because I did not care to appear down and out before my friends. My stepfather at that time was working for the Trent Navigation Company on a barge which carried cargo between Gainsborough and Nottingham, and on one of his outward journeys I went down the river with him to my native village, where I obtained employment in the fields until the harvest had been reaped, after which I again returned to Nottingham to search for work. Eventually a french-polisher, named Kelly, who had a small but precarious business in Nottingham, offered to teach me his trade and, *faute de mieux*, I entered into a sort of apprenticeship engagement with him. The wages were six shillings per week, on which I lived for some months, when the business failed, and the job terminated. This was for me a most miserable and demoralizing period; and I have never since needed textbooks on economics, or the descriptions of social workers, to teach me what unemployment means. For a long time hunger and myself were constant companions, and my Christmas dinner for that year consisted of bread and dripping. I had become a member of the Workmen's Peace Association, which met at the Friends' Meeting House, and this connection, together with an instinctive horror of war, probably prevented me from trying to enlist in the army, as a private soldier.

Preachers and politicians who have never undergone the physical and moral suffering which unemployment then involved, constantly assert that such experiences are enviable and enriching. They talk foolishly about what they do not understand. There is a side of the unemployment problem with which they have not the least intention of becoming personally acquainted, and I know that their platitudinous envy of the man who has passed through the privations, and endured the social indignities associated with unemployment, is either insincere or based upon ignorance. Unemployment, which involves physical degeneration and the sense that a man is superfluous, is dismissed, unused, and unwanted, is not ennobling; it is entirely debasing. It is more likely to turn a man into a loafer, a criminal, or a revolutionist, than into a balanced and creative citizen. It warps both body and mind, and its grim experiences left me with physical and nervous disabilities that permanently lessened my powers of endurance and reduced my efficiency in the work of my life. More than forty years later I attempted to indicate all that unemployment had meant to me when, in the House of Commons, I was asked, upon the assumption of office of a Labour Government in 1929, to move the formal Address in response to the King's Speech with which the new Parliament had opened. Commenting on the question of unemployment with which the 'speech' had dealt, I said: 'Will the House allow me a personal word? I have walked the streets unemployed, heart-broken, and foot-sore, and, although I have now forgotten the hungry days, and the physical privations involved, the spiritual depression and the moral agony of it all remain indelibly written upon my memory. It is written that the punishment for man's first sin was that by the sweat of his face he should eat bread. At this hour, that which was intended as a punishment and a curse for wrongdoing, would be welcomed as a too-long delayed blessing in more than a million British homes.'

I cannot remember what occasioned it, but some relief came to me, unexpectedly and unsought, from Mr. Anderson, to whom I have previously referred. From among his friends he obtained for me little jobs of french-polishing, and he invented other ways of paying me small sums for tasks which were more or less superfluous. I became a frequent visitor to his house at Beeston; I read his papers and borrowed his books, and the help that his interest provided enabled me to hold on until I obtained regular work. My gratitude to him has been constant and sincere, and I

have tried to repay his timely helpfulness by serving, to the best of my powers, some of the causes to the forwarding of which his own life has been devoted. And during the many periods of depression and disappointment which I have since experienced, I have been sustained and encouraged by the memory that, unsolicited and without conditions, a fine public servant by his own choice stood for a time between myself and despair.

I find it difficult to record in detail the many difficulties and privations of this period of my life, for to recall them even to my own memory is very like the pain associated with the reopening of a recently healed wound. I can only assure the reader of this book that behind these general phrases there is a grim background of physical impoverishment and emotional suffering that I do not care to describe.

I sometimes think that to a sensitive and alert-minded man, long continued unemployment is the major curse of life; it is psychologically disastrous because its effects are permanent; it leaves its sinister mark upon both mind and character, and it may so take the light out of a man's life that he lives thereafter in a darkened world. When wages are again forthcoming hunger departs; but memory remains. No one who has not experienced the benumbing effect of the vain endeavour, week after week, to sell labour which no one wants, can understand the mental hell in which the unemployed man lives. In the proportion that he is moved by the creative impulse, or by social and professional ambition, there is developed within him 'a nerve o'er which do creep the else unfelt oppressions of the earth.' He may feel that he is capable in body and mind; his hands may itch for constructive exercise; his brain may become impatient for wholesome activity, but there is for him neither demand nor sympathetic consideration. Comfortably placed critics of unemployed men frequently delude themselves that any man who is 'genuinely seeking work' can easily find it! They should be thankful that they are not compelled to put their careless philosophy to the test of a personal experience.

The effect upon my life of continued unemployment might well have been disastrous. I had persistently to fight and repel a growing sense of grievance against the world, and to suppress an impulse to meet its callousness with its own methods. Why should I be so considerate for it, when it disavowed any responsibility for myself? I had not asked to be born, and if the world was free to let me starve, was I not equally free to adopt any effective

means to prevent it from succeeding? In that kind of mental cradle, many a revolutionist has been nursed to destructive strength, and although my own general outlook upon life and duty prevented me from drifting towards violent revolutionary activities, I was nevertheless affected to the extent that, for a time, I regarded society as a stupid and callous ass, which I was justified in trying to kick in its well-fed stomach as it passed.

The memory of those bitter days still bites into my soul like a hot iron, and I rejoice that long before I had heard of Abraham Lincoln's outraged avowal in the slave market of New Orleans I too had determined that if ever I should get the chance to hit on its ugly mouth the social system that was so piously indifferent to the suffering that it produced, 'by God I will hit it hard.'

I think that during this testing period my mental balance was preserved by the knowledge that there is a degree to which struggle against adversity is a wholesome discipline. To put forth energy, to contest against great odds, to refuse to be cowed and brow-beaten by circumstances, is to live, to prove the temper of the blood, and to encourage the humblest man to feel that something abides within him which is greater even than the stars.

Dieser ist ein Mensch geworden,
Und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein.

But when a man has to devote the whole of his faculties to the urgent need to secure a belated and precarious crust, he is reduced to the level of a beast in the jungle.

As I look back upon this searching period of my life I think that, amid periods of gloom and depression, alternating with other periods of spiritual recovery and renewed hopefulness, my most constant attitude was that I had no intention of allowing myself to be beaten, and that in some uncertain way I should win through. The decisive defeat in life is not to remain poor, but to become broken in spirit, to suffer an invasion of the sacred citadel of the will. The man who keeps that inviolate has triumphed, and has indeed beaten failure to its knees.

I remember, too, that consolations so freely offered to me that the troubles of life must be bravely borne because there was the hope of a brighter world beyond the grave, gave me no comfort at all. I definitely wished to hold my own, not in some quite problematical after-life, but in the world I had, and knew, and loved.

As the bird trims her to the gale,
 I trim myself to the storm of time,
 I man the rudder, reef the sail.¹

Employment eventually came to me of a kind which aroused my keenest interest. Mr. Warren, the superintendent of the Unitarian Sunday school, was also the honorary secretary of the Midland Institution for the Blind, which was located in Nottingham, and which, in addition to providing a home and a general and technical education for juvenile blind pupils, employed in its workshops adult blind workers in the manufacture of brushes, baskets, and mats. Through Mr. Warren's recommendation I obtained employment at the Institution as assistant to the secretary and manager, a post which I held until I left Nottingham for London in the spring of 1890. In addition to clerical work of a general kind, my duties required me to call upon subscribers for their annual contributions, and to wait upon the managers of factories and warehouses to induce them to order from the Institution such goods as it manufactured or could profitably supply. The wages at the beginning were sixteen shillings, and they never rose to more than twenty-five shillings per week, but the change from the kind of occupation I had been compelled to follow was most welcome, and I gave to my new duties every quality of sympathy and industry that I possessed. The better to fulfil them I attended evening classes in book-keeping, handwriting, and business methods; and I spent at the Blind Institution the first happy years of my adult life.

I have already stated that I had secured this situation through the recommendation of Mr. Warren, as a result of my connection with the Unitarian chapel, and when I was forbidden any longer to enter its doors it seemed to me impossible that I should retain any advantage which my association with it had brought, and I at once told Mr. Warren that I should prefer once more to face the hazards and hardships of unemployment, rather than remain under any kind of obligation either to him or to the chapel. He was a man who was greatly beloved by all who knew him, and his influence over young people was as rare as it was ennobling. He was a loyal friend, and a great gentleman, and, perhaps because he appeared to be an unwilling agent of the school authorities, he met my injured pride with the gentle strength of a great man. I had an emotional interview with him, during which he made it clear

¹ R. W. Emerson.

to me that my resignation on the grounds suggested would be unfair to him and needlessly injurious to myself, and I accordingly withdrew it. In thinking about this incident at a later date I could not defend, even to myself, the step I had proposed to take, but at the time it seemed to be not only the right thing, but also the inevitable thing to do. Warren jocularly accused me of lacking an efficient technique. He said that the proper way to resign, when smarting under a sense of personal injury, was to sit down one night after supper and write a passionate and scathing letter of abuse to the boss, seal it carefully and emphatically, and leave it ready for posting. The essential thing, however, was that directly you came downstairs the next morning you should tear it up and throw the pieces on the fire. It was good advice.

I always felt that I had Mr. Warren's sympathy in the matter of my expulsion from the Unitarian school, and I was convinced of this when, in October 1905, six years afterwards, he invited me to attend a centenary meeting of the Old Scholars' Association, and expressed the hope that 'you have still a warm enough corner in your heart (however badly we treated you) for the High Pavement Sunday school.' Owing to the fact that he did not know my London address, this invitation did not reach me until two days before the gathering, but I replied that, as the order prohibiting me from using the school had not been withdrawn, I could not, on his personal invitation, run the risk of being refused admission at the door. In reply he assured me that the 'invitation was not my personal one merely, but on behalf of the school to an old scholar.' This letter arrived on the day of the meeting; but as I had not the money available for the journey, and as I could not immediately leave my work at Woolwich, I did not accept his invitation. Mr. Warren was also good enough to say that he thought that 'both sides may a little have misunderstood the position of matters in those bygone days.'

I sometimes think that no one ever used to greater advantage periods of compulsory unemployment than myself. Every hour that was not spent in looking for work was devoted to my own education. I began to study the French language, but my lack of training in English grammar made the task unusually difficult. I had no help nor guidance in my studies, and the progress that I made in such subjects as English and arithmetic was far from satisfactory. Mr. Anderson, with great consideration for my needs, advanced the small entrance fee which enabled me to become

a member of the Mechanics' Institution, which then, as now, was one of the great educational forces in the town. It had a well-stocked reference and lending library, a fine reading room, and it was the centre of many social and humanitarian activities. It was also warm and comfortable. No one ever got better value for the small annual subscription charged for membership of the Institution than myself, for in its hospitable rooms and in the reference library of the University College I spent hundreds of industrious and profitable hours.

My reading during this period was both extensive and haphazard. Scores of books that I went through were out of date, and I frequently missed those that were the recognized authorities on the subjects that I studied. Not more than a few of the books that then aroused my special interest need be mentioned here. Spencer's *First Principles* I read several times, and at the end I even deluded myself that I understood it. I also went carefully through his *Sociology*, *Social Statics*, *Man versus the State*, *Education*, *The Data of Ethics*, and many of his shorter essays. I worked at Mill's *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, for no other reason than that I had heard it highly commended by a lecturer. Much of my reading at this time was on subjects connected with the theory of evolution, which was then arousing keen discussion, and Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, as well as the writings of Huxley on the subject, claimed my special interest. The sciences of astronomy and geology also made a strong appeal to me, especially the former, and I read most of the available popular material concerning it. I do not know any study more likely to develop the imaginative faculties of a young person, to awaken in him a sense of reverence for the majesty of the universe, or to give to him the quality of a becoming modesty, than that of astronomy; but I had to abandon my study of it for lack of a mathematical training, and I had to forsake geology because I could not afford the expense of necessary field-work. Sir Charles Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*, Sir E. B. Tylor's *Anthropology and Primitive Culture*, and all the works of Clifford and Tyndall, especially the latter's famous *Belfast Address*, occupied my attention, and I was specially drawn to the writings of Sir John Lubbock.

Looking back on this period of mental voracity, and on the attempt I made to acquaint myself with what the best minds of the age were thinking on the subjects that interested me, I realize how much misdirected energy was used, and I am regretfully conscious

of the fact that, had friendly guidance and a prescribed course of reading been at my disposal, better results might have emerged from my endeavours. On the other hand, this undirected exploration undoubtedly helped, by showing me that the problems of life were both many and varied, and it provided a background to all my subsequent studies. It may thus have constituted a better preparation for the work I was afterwards called upon to do, than if I had ploughed a deeper furrow in a narrower field.

Among the books dealing with religion which greatly influenced me during this formative period were Draper's *The History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, which, appearing in 1874, had reached in ten years no less than eighteen editions, and *The Intellectual Development of Europe* by the same author, which had been published in London in 1864. Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* I read, mainly because orthodox people said that it was the most dangerous book in the world, and because the name of its author was the target for their uninformed abuse. Theodore Roosevelt at a later period described Paine as a 'filthy little atheist,'¹ who had lived the life of a drunkard and died screaming for mercy from the God against whose Name he had blasphemed. The book did not come up to my expectations. It was neither blasphemous nor filthy. Moreover, Paine was not an atheist, but a devout theist, and his criticism of the Bible was of a kind which intelligent theologians of our own day would regard as moderate and old-fashioned. The *Life of Jesus* by Renan (1863) and Strauss's well-known work with the same title influenced me considerably, as did Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, which in 1865 he had thought it prudent to issue anonymously. William Howitt's *History of Priestcraft in all Ages and Nations* also interested me, again because it was so stoutly abused. One clerical magazine said that 'the author had written himself Fiend on every page,' and 'Archdeacon Wilkins of Nottingham (Howitt's native town), a pluralist recorded by Howitt to have had eight livings, assailed him with proper wrath as guilty of "devilishness,"' although the *Athenaeum's* verdict on the book was that it was a 'splendid piece of eloquence and reminds us a good deal of the prose of Milton.'² I also read a good deal of the current ephemeral literature dealing with religious and scientific questions; the discussions between Huxley and Wace on agnosticism, and the onesided controversy between Mr. Gladstone

¹ *Gouverneur Morris*, p. 229.

² J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 78.

and Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the great American orator, were a special delight.

In addition to private study of this kind I attended as many classes as I could pay the fees for at the University College, physiology and hygiene being among my favourite subjects. I also attempted to do something with the science of chemistry and biology, in the belief that it was advisable to have a scientific basis for reading in theoretical questions such as religion, philosophy, and economics. I soon found, however, that the systematic study of scientific questions, and the preparation for examinations, could not effectively be pursued with such serious and exacting rivals as religion and social questions, and I had to let them go.

There was also another reason. Over-study, associated with anxiety and under-nourishment, drew too heavily upon my energies, and I fear helped to produce the nervous strain which has been the constant drawback of my public life. The politician, especially if he has any capacity for research, exposition, organization, or administration, requires powers of endurance and great reserves of strength on which he can draw at all times, and in almost unlimited measure, and in my case these powers were seriously damaged before my real work in life began.

Associated with me in the studies referred to were several young men of my own age, among whom were two who, like myself, were members of the local Secular Society: Mr. John Coppock, who became a lecturer in science at one of the northern colleges, and Mr. F. W. Jones, who was later a well-known authority on explosives. Both of them were fine-grained young men who, not feeling the urge within them to study the religious and economic problems which seemed to me so important, went further than myself in the subjects to which their studies were restricted.

My interest in the question of the influence of modern scientific thought upon religious belief, remained constant, possibly because of the need I felt to discover my own attitude toward it. My first attempts at public speaking were made at the small meetings of the local Secular Society; and in the work of its committees I received the training which, in other activities, has enabled me to endure assertive incompetence without a too obvious impatience. It also gave me my first experience of the misery of trying to organize unpopular causes, and of the faith and patience which are required when mental and spiritual energy has to be pumped into the minds of people who at times appear not to be fully awake.

Among those who lectured to the Secular Society during this period was Mrs. Besant, and I find it difficult to measure the extent to which I was influenced by that extraordinary woman. But it was certainly great and lasting. I had already come under the dominating sway of Charles Bradlaugh, and I had accepted without reservation at least one of his declared principles. It was from him I learned that truth must be sought for diligently and when found must be proclaimed from the housetops. It was not to be whispered in obscure places and among discreet and silent friends; it was to be shouted as glad tidings to all men. A strong man himself, he believed in strength. He advocated the wisdom of self-reliance, and under his influence, I read many times, and copied for pocket reference, parts of Emerson's famous essay on that subject which, for more than two generations, has been for me an unfailing source of encouragement and strength.

The influence upon my mind of Mrs. Besant's teaching was of another kind. She appeared to me to make a welcome constructive appeal, and her matchless eloquence moved me to an unusual degree. She became for a time something of a spiritual mother to me, and although I had but little sympathy with much of her later teaching, and sincerely deplored some of her associations, she had, through all the variations of her intellectual life, my deep respect and gratitude. Mrs. Besant was in my judgment the most distinguished English-speaking woman then living, and among the greatest orators of her time. When I first heard her she had just been deprived of the custody of her children, and had been refused permission to use the garden of the Royal Botanical Society for her studies, on the ground that the daughters of the curator also used it, and in the year 1883, she and Miss Alice Bradlaugh were refused admission to the practical botany class at University College, London, because there was 'some prejudice' against them. The council of the college in due course endorsed the action of the officials, but, as the result of a memorial signed by, among others, Professors Huxley, Bain, Frankland, and Sir E. B. Tylor, they agreed to summon an extraordinary general meeting, when the medical graduates, whose passion for piety and orthodoxy was to say the least unusual, rallied to the support of the council, and University College was delivered from the danger of having among its students two distinguished ladies against whom there was 'some prejudice.' Present-day graduates and undergraduates may think it a reflection on the honour of their college that only

nine voted against the council's action, although the college had been founded with the direct object of dispensing with religious qualifications. It is also deplorable that members of the Christian churches should have applauded this action, attended as it was, according to the account given of it by Mr. Robertson,¹ 'with circumstances of personal discourtesy' to two ladies, one because her views on religion were unpopular; to the other, because she bore her father's name. 'The spirit of partisanship, with all the hatred, injustice, and cruelty which it evokes, has dogged Christianity like its shadow from the very first, and has enabled its enemies to maintain plausibly, that it has brought more evil than good to the human race. All other vices of human nature have been diminished by Christianity; this one it seems actually to have increased.'²

Mrs. Besant's influence over me was probably increased by these uncharitable actions, and I remember that, not being able to buy cut flowers for her lecture-table upon one of her Sunday visits, I spent the preceding Saturday afternoon and evening in collecting the most beautiful wild flowers that the neighbouring lanes and fields provided. They made a pretty showing, too, notwithstanding their humble origin.

Among those who lectured in Nottingham during this period was Mr. Foote, who in 1883 had suffered a year's imprisonment for blasphemy, on account of printed matter which had appeared in the *Freethinker*, a weekly journal of which he was the founder, editor, and proprietor. The aim of those who were responsible for this prosecution was political, and designed to reach Bradlaugh, whose publishing firm had exposed the journal for sale. Their attempt, however, completely failed. Mr. Foote had a literary capacity of a high order, and he was a forceful and impressive speaker. The Lord Chief Justice, who sat with a special jury some weeks after the original verdict to try the case afresh, Bradlaugh having moved that the case 'be removed from the Old Bailey by certiorari,' freely admitted that Mr. Foote was not a 'licentious writer,' and he revealed his opinion of the character of the prosecution by saying that 'we have to administer the law, whether we like it or not.' The abandonment of the High Court prosecution left the savage sentence passed by Mr. Justice North unchanged, and Mr. Foote completed his sentence in Holloway prison. I afterwards knew him very well, and I always admired the work of

¹ *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 429.

² W. R. Inge, *Assessments and Anticipations*, p. 41.

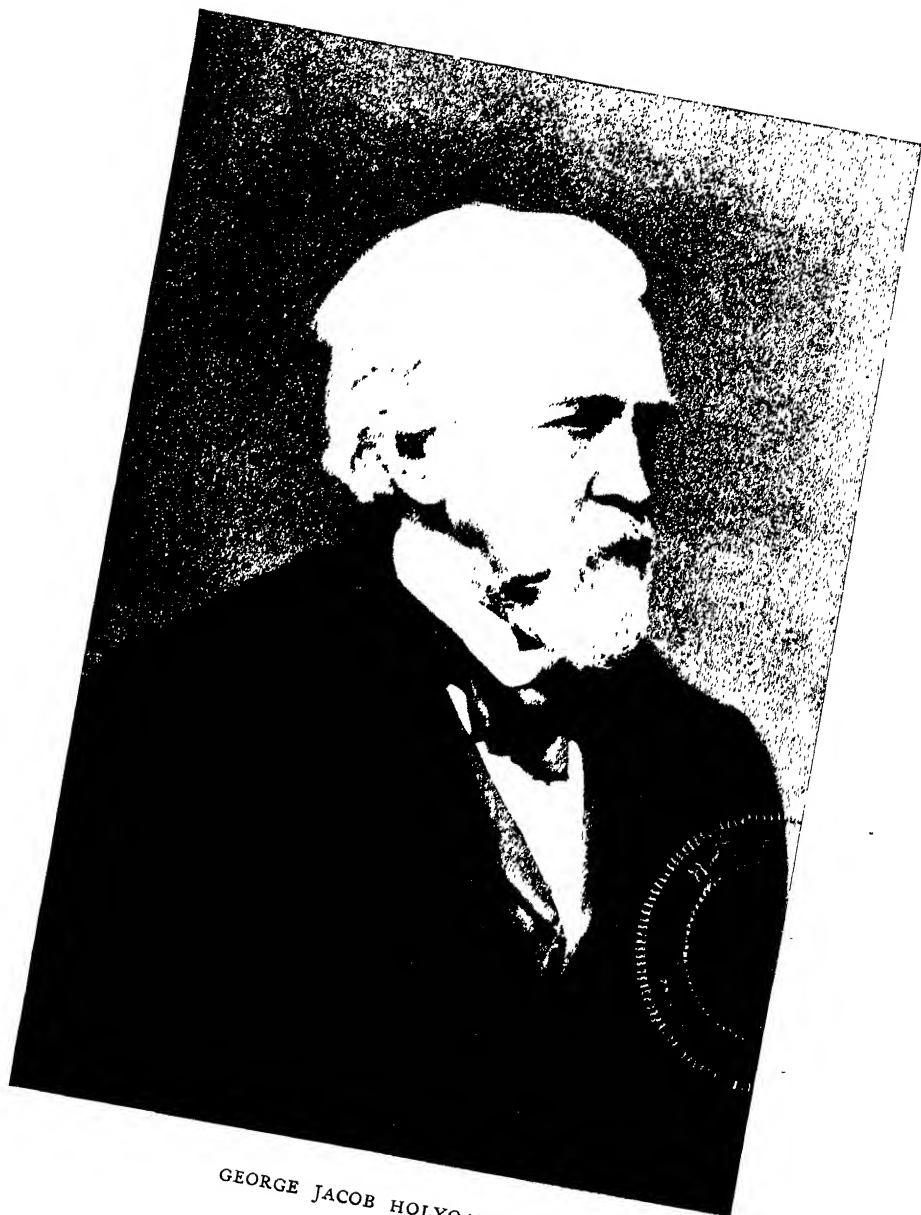
his well-trained pen, but I cannot remember that my own thought was in any way influenced by him.¹

Another interesting visitor was the veteran reformer, George Jacob Holyoake. Born in the year 1817, Holyoake became a mathematical master in the Mechanics' Institute at Birmingham, a position he held until 1840, when he resigned to become an Owenite 'social missionary.' His mental quality had been proved by the fact that in 1845, against seventy-nine competitors, some of them clergymen, 'he had won all five of a set of ten-pound prizes, offered by the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows for the five best essays on Charity, Truth, Knowledge, Science, and Progression.'² He, too, had suffered six months' imprisonment on a trivial charge of blasphemy, owing to remarks, made in a discussion after a Socialist lecture, which were 'witty enough to have disarmed most bigots.' Holyoake was by no means impressive, either as an orator or as a personality, and his feeble voice and frail physique necessitated a platform manner which was altogether different from that of Bradlaugh's compelling passion. He had not the physical energy required for effective declamation, nor the vocal power for moving perorations. But he had other weapons which were very effective. Some of his finely chiselled phrases cut like a knife, and his sardonic allusions not infrequently brought him trouble. An illustration of the wayward note in his advocacy is provided by a remark relating to the controversy between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism, viz. that considering the manifold troubles of the world, he considered that three Gods were not too many to attend to them.

By the time that I got to know him fairly well his work had for the most part been done, but he was always a welcome speaker as representing the heroism of earlier days. Young people loved him 'for the dangers he had passed,' while seasoned reformers regarded him with the affection due to a revered colleague and teacher. Holyoake was one of the best type of working-class leaders in the nineteenth century, and he will occupy a distinguished place in the story of their fight for political and social freedom. He took a kindly interest in my own work, but never failed to chide me for my limited faith in some of the causes that aroused his own enthusiasm. I remember the genial and gentle old man with great respect and some gratitude.

¹ See J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 430-3.

² *Ibid.* p. 295.



GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

During this period I came into contact with many other striking personalities, whose thoughts and example helped to shape and guide my activities, and I look back to my association with them with great pleasure and with indebtedness for all that they taught me. A vast number of orthodox people find it consoling to believe that those who are unable to accept the religious dogmas of their age, are sceptics because they desire to free themselves from the restraints that religion imposes upon the sincere believer. I have many times heard clergymen and ministers, who were sufficiently educated to have known better, declare that sceptics preferred doubt to faith, because it left them free to live in accordance with their natural impulses. I have had the privilege during the last forty-five years of knowing, in some cases intimately, all the leading secularists in England, and with complete sincerity I avow that, in personal character, in their devotion to truth, in their relations with their fellows, whether judged as friends or as colleagues, as business associates, or as teachers, they were not shamed when compared with their orthodox neighbours, while as citizens they were frequently an example of what enlightened citizenship should be.

People who are able to believe without effort or misgiving the ready-made creeds of their fathers, are not called upon to experience the inner stress of those who, unable to accept as true and final the current faiths, are compelled to search for peace in untrodden fields. Many of those who consider themselves entitled to judge the sceptic, assume that a man can believe or not believe as he pleases, and that if he rejects what they accept it is because he is wilfully perverse and wicked. They no more understand the spiritual experiences of a creative mind than a cow understands the beauty of a sunset, nor can they realize that those who prefer to worship at other altars, or at none, judged by any test of goodness as we understand it, may be even superior to those who, with uncomprehending lethargy, accept the theological assumptions of their time. The fact that millions of Jews, Buddhists, Muhammadans, and Hindus, who have never heard of the doctrines they themselves regard as essential to the good life, are in moral stature equal with themselves, adds neither to their charity nor to their understanding.

Intolerance towards the unorthodox was more marked two generations ago than it is to-day, when much that the sceptic then challenged has been abandoned. He had then to face not only social ostracism, but also economic persecution. He was thought of, and frequently treated, as an intellectual and moral leper.

People did not count their spoons in his presence, because he was rarely invited where there would be spoons to count. Their attitude to the sceptic was that which Macaulay described as the Catholic theory: 'I am in the right and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger you ought to tolerate me, for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you, for it is my duty to persecute error.'¹

Narrow piety of this kind does not convert the sceptic, but it influences his life in unexpected ways. It isolates him from his fellows, and it intensifies his resentments. In any case it was probably responsible for a shyness and reserve which, throughout my life, has caused me to shun the social amenities that most men seek and enjoy. If I was not welcome among the unco guid, I could at least take refuge in the books of greater minds, and I have, perhaps in consequence of this, consistently avoided social functions. In confessing this I am describing, not defending, myself, for I am ready to believe that had social relationships been as necessary to me as they appear to be to most people, I might have broken down whatever barriers existed. But I was constitutionally the very opposite of a 'gate crasher.'

My attitude towards religion at this time, or at any time, was not, I believed, an ignoble one. I had no settled opinions respecting the mystery of the universe, or about man's origin and destiny; but I quite definitely resolved that, since no priest or church could suffer for me if my beliefs concerning these things were wrong, no priest and no church should decide for me what my beliefs should be. If my errors merited eternal punishment, they should at least be my own; and I have lived long enough to see many of the speculations and hesitations of my inquiring years accepted and preached as revealed truth by the respected clergy of our own day.

It would not be treating the reader of these pages with proper consideration were I to attempt to justify or criticize the opinions, convictions, and activities which are here recorded. What I have written concerning them is rather a description than a defence, and they must be left to tell their own story. If the reader detects in them faults of logic and consistency I can only say that in my own mind they possess both unity and an invariable motive. If the record of my attitude towards the religious movements with which I deal should hurt any one's feelings, I shall deeply regret it; but I nevertheless believe that no institution and no religion is either

¹ Quoted by W. R. Inge, *Assessments and Anticipations*, p. 44.

honoured or helped when it is shielded from criticism, and that the ultimate truth is far more likely to be served by a wholesome free trade in ideas, than by any form of concealed distrust or doctrinal protection.

I was at this period accused of belonging, by perverse choice, to the intellectual underworld. Those who never knew it may so describe it. But I know it was in that alleged and despised 'underworld' that I got my first glimpse of those inexhaustible treasures which are to be found in the kingdom of the mind.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIALISM AND EARLY PROPAGANDA

In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

WALT WHITMAN.

FROM my own experience, and as a consequence of my changed religious outlook, I, quite early in my life, became interested in political and social questions. Merely to reject certain theological doctrines which previous generations had accepted, did not appear to me to be a sufficient or satisfactory philosophy of life. In so far as those doctrines were thought to be untrue they had of course to be abandoned; so much at least was required by loyalty to my own conscience and to truth itself. But what then? Was there not a creative as well as a critical obligation? And if the old theories and conclusions were not convincing, must not better explanations of social disorder be sought? That poverty, ugliness, and sin existed I knew by bitter personal experience; but were these afflictions removable by man's enlightened effort, or were they permanent torments which man had to endure? The prevailing opinion was almost wholly on the side of their permanence. Had not God made man in His own image, and therefore perfect? Had not all his needs been provided for? And was it not true that if he had obeyed the divine command he would have avoided the burdens of poverty, pain, and sin? These punishments had rightly descended upon him because he had chosen evil rather than good; and he could be delivered from them only by God Himself. The most that man could do was to pray for forgiveness, and hope for happiness in a better and brighter world. Was this doctrine of human helplessness true? If it was, man should, of course, devote himself almost exclusively to the selfish business of making safe his own soul. 'There is nothing worth a thought beneath, but how we may escape the death, that never, never dies.'

Youth is seldom depressed over a long period of time, and my recovery from the spiritual torpor induced by this fatalistic teaching

was not too long delayed. But the Malthusian theory of the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence was a more difficult matter. Arguments based upon this theory were persistently used in support of the current economic theories, and as an excuse for the then prevailing social conditions. And the thought that any temporary betterment of the lot of the workers would automatically be cancelled by a sudden and unprecedented rise in the birth-rate was, for a time, an almost decisive difficulty. What was the use of trying to raise the standard of life of the poor, if 'the undying delight of humanity in its own reproduction' automatically kept population pressing upon subsistence? Light upon this problem came slowly, and for a considerable time all my political thinking was influenced by the fear that the 'law of population' might render futile all attempts to secure social betterment.

The economic fatalism of the economists had also to be considered. These terrifying persons appeared to be contemptuously hostile to any policy which would hinder the free play of economic forces. Émile de Lavelaye in 1883, for example, had protested against Bismarck's 'abominable proposition to create a fund for pensioning invalid workmen by a monopoly of tobacco.'¹ In 1817, the Rev. J. Townsend, in his *Dissertation on the Poor Laws*, had found delight in the fact that the poor multiply rapidly in order 'that there may always be some to fulfil the most servile, the most sordid, and the most ignoble offices in the community. The stock of human happiness is thereby increased, whilst the more delicate are not only relieved from drudgery . . . but are left without interruption to pursue those callings which are suited to their various dispositions.'² Then Sir Henry Maine, in his well-known work on *Popular Government*, showed that the idea of the inevitability of the fierce struggle for life, with its attendant extremes of riches and poverty, had descended without serious modification to his own day. 'The motives which impel mankind to produce wealth are such as infallibly entail inequality in distribution. They are the springs of action called into activity by the strenuous and never-ceasing struggle for existence, the *beneficent private war which makes one man climb upon the shoulders of another and remain there, through the law of the survival of the fittest.*'³

¹ E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 16.

² Quoted by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*, p. 13.

³ *Popular Government*, p. 50.

The employing classes and the political reactionaries of the time quickly found that this theory of the inevitability of poverty was entirely agreeable and comforting. Its implications were as butter and honey in their mouths. They became converted to political economy in spite of themselves: the doctrine of evolution was crowned with their approval and commandeered to their service. Darwin himself had intended the term 'survival of the fittest' to be used in a 'large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, and including not only the life of the individual but success in leaving progeny.'¹ In the *Descent of Man* he had indicated that not the fiercest, the physically strongest, or the most cunning, but those who knew how to combine for common ends, would better serve the progress of the race. Those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring. It is not unusual in the history of religious and economic movements, that the disciples are less discreet than the master. Thus, Huxley maintained that 'the weakest and stupidest went to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were the best fitted to cope with their circumstances, but not the best in any other way, survived. Life was a continuous free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence.'

Belief in the possibility of a continuous and ordered progress was not easy when the doctrine of the *status quo* was served by such heavy battalions, and my political opinions were in consequence formed slowly and with many misgivings. Herbert Spencer, whose authority was so weighty and by whom I had been so greatly influenced, had insisted that it was harmful for the State or municipality to provide free libraries or even health-preserving sanitation, and Lubbock, to whom I was equally indebted, had gone nearly as far in the same direction. The neo-Darwinian teaching of the time was adroitly adopted by the forces of organized selfishness, which too frequently hid their real motives behind the names of chambers of commerce and similar beneficent institutions. The line of least resistance for me would undoubtedly have been not to kick against the pricks, for only the economically imprudent challenged the prejudices of the existing order.

My political opinions at this time were those of the Radical

¹ *Origin of Species*, chapter iii.

school, and I did some work in the Rushcliffe division, where Mr. John Edward Ellis, one of the ablest and most respected Radicals of his time, was the member. Only very slowly did I discard the hesitations and misgivings which the neo-Darwinians and the Malthusian economists had implanted in my mind, and my approach towards a co-operative or a Socialist conception of society was both wearisome and cautious.

The opposition to Socialism of Bradlaugh and other writers associated with him was a disturbing fact that I could not ignore, and I read with great care everything that they had written on the subject. It was only after I had made a careful study of the debates between Bradlaugh and Henry Mayers Hyndman, that I finally abandoned the individualism of which the former of these distinguished men was then the most powerful exponent, and I have never had the least doubt that the choice which I then made was right. The adhesion to Socialism of Mrs. Besant had helped to sway my mind, and in due course I made my confession of faith one Sunday evening from the platform of the Social Democratic Federation, at a meeting in the Great Market Place which was addressed by the late Mr. John Hunter Watts. Once the decision had been taken, I experienced a sense of relief which has remained constant throughout my life, and I have been continuously satisfied that I associated myself with a cause which was both creative in outlook, and a wholesome revolt against the soulless economics of the old order. Whatever may be the theoretical short comings of the Socialist philosophy, or however much its proposals may be modified by future experience, I was then convinced that it was one of the essential and most wholesome corrective movements of the age.

Almost as soon as I became a member of the Social Democratic Federation, its members discovered that I possessed 'the gift of the gab,' and they insisted upon my taking an active part in its local propaganda. We were all very young, and those of us who spoke for 'the cause' at that time were probably more vociferous than informed, but what we lacked in experience we made up in emphasis and assurance. When in debate we were defeated by more experienced advocates of the older political parties, we laughed at our failures and returned merrily to the assault. The best that can now be said of the propaganda that we conducted is, that it probably taught us far more than it influenced those who listened to our speeches. We were, however, sensible enough to

know that our own efforts needed the support of more seasoned speakers, and among the imported advocates whom we induced to help us was Edward Carpenter, who was then living near Sheffield. He was at that time cultivating a small-holding, the produce of which he sold from a stall in the market-place of a neighbouring town. Carpenter's literary work was then known only to the discerning few, but by them admired. Together with most young students of the day, I read approvingly his political and social essays, but his *Towards Democracy*, the book that made him famous, was then a little beyond my scope. The groups of young social democrats of the period were greatly attached to Carpenter's *Chants for Socialists*, especially to his hymn, *England Arise*, which has been sung with fervour at Labour and Socialist meetings for more than two generations. My early acquaintance with him centres around the memories of a Sunday fellowship meeting held at Ambergate, midway between the towns of Nottingham, Sheffield, and Leicester. To this convenient place there came on an appointed day small parties of Socialist workers in the areas mentioned, for the purpose of conference and fellowship. The gathering was on a Sunday, and the day was wet and unpleasant; but we crowded into the local inn, where Carpenter played the piano, and we sang, under his leadership, all the best-known Socialist songs. I learned later to appreciate the Whitmanesque style and power of *Towards Democracy*, which became one of my most treasured books.

Many of these early Socialist meetings were held at the meeting-place of the local Secular Society, and frequently under its auspices. Among the most notable speakers and writers whom I persuaded to visit us was William Morris, the famous poet and craftsman. I had written to him with some hesitation, and with little hope of receiving a favourable reply, but to my delight he wrote a cordial letter, and fixed a date for his visit. When the details of the proposed meetings came under his consideration he wrote:

KELMSCOTT HOUSE,
UPPER MALL,
HAMMERSMITH.
Nov. 5, 1888.

DEAR SIR,

I am distressed that you should think any apology necessary for what was my fault if it was anybody's. I only mentioned my mistake to account for my declining to give a 3rd lecture in a hall, whereas I should not have been unwilling to have taken part in an open-air meeting. I am always ready to address an audience whoever may be responsible for getting it together; and

I have much sympathy with the Secularists; though of course I owe duty first to the Socialists. I have no doubt of your giving me a kind reception and an attentive hearing.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM MORRIS.

The visit of Morris was naturally a great occasion for the Socialists of the town, and they looked forward to it with the liveliest interest. The subject chosen for his Sunday morning address was 'Art and the Working Classes,' and the Rev. Professor J. E. Symes, the principal of the University College, accepted our invitation to preside, thereby bringing upon himself considerable trouble. Socialist lecturers were as a rule designedly ignored by the local newspapers, but they could not conveniently avoid mentioning the visit of so great a figure as William Morris, and when the Monday papers reported that the principal of the University College of the town had taken the chair at a Socialist meeting, the local philistines gasped with horror, and became incoherent with rage. Did they employ a professor of literature to give aid and comfort to a rabble of confiscating Socialists? It was an outrage for which the injured ratepayer demanded instant revenge. They did not know, of course, that Morris was one of the outstanding literary personalities of his day, of whom Swinburne had said: 'In all the noble roll of our poets, there has been since Chaucer, no second teller of tales comparable to the first till the advent of this one.' But that did not matter. Morris was a Socialist agitator, who believed in beauty for the working classes. Had those who wrote indignant letters of protest to the papers actually heard the lecture, their wrath would have been boundless, for Morris was one of the most impatient controversialists I have ever known, and the restraint to which he subjected his rich vocabulary was not always equal to the occasion. He would enforce an argument with words which a smaller man would hesitate to use, and his anger, should any one in the discussion which followed his lectures express approval of the attempt then being made to 'restore' the western front of Peterborough Cathedral, was altogether uncontrollable. His connection with the Socialist movement I shall deal with later; but it was Morris who first made me consciously aware of the ugliness of a society which so arranged its affairs that its workers were deprived of the beauty which life should give. I remember

him as a bluff, vital, and challenging personality, whose influence upon those who knew him was both marked and lasting.

I was one of the many thousands of young men whose political and social views were greatly stimulated by Henry George's famous book, *Progress and Poverty*, which, if measured by the breadth and the depth of its influence on the thoughtful young workmen of the eighties, must be considered as one of the greatest political documents of that generation. It made an instant and abiding impression upon my mind; I read it several times, but, although I greatly admired it, I never gave to the theory of the single tax the allegiance that entitled one to a place among the elect of that somewhat assertive faith. The direct method of land nationalization appeared to me to avoid some of the difficulties, theoretical and practical, that the policy of the single tax involved. I found it increasingly difficult, for instance, to decide what was the precise boundary line between land which should be taxed, and capital which would escape taxation. What, for instance, was a coal mine? Was it capital, the land being limited to the shaft necessary to reach the coal, or was it not merely capital but developed land? What, also, were canals, docks, and railways? And if they were capital, why should they be immune from taxation? Why should the landlord be taxed while other monopolies escaped? Nevertheless, the eloquence of the book, its brilliant and sustained arguments, its refreshing moral enthusiasm, so unusual in economic treatises, arrested the attention of the group of students with whom I was associated, and they were in consequence induced to add political economy to their subjects of study.

When, therefore, Henry George visited England in connection with the propaganda which his book had stimulated, Mr. Anderson and three or four friends, including myself, with more courage than judgment, invited him to come and tell the good news to the people of Nottingham. We engaged the large hall of the Mechanics' Institution for the meeting, which we advertised by poster, handbill, and newspaper notices: we used every available method of publicity, and we awaited with assurance the packed hall of political and economic students who, we felt certain, would wish to see and hear the most discussed economist of the day. We should have known better. George appeared on the platform to time, and gave a most stimulating address to about two hundred and fifty people, most of whom were our own personal friends. I then learned, what experience has since confirmed, that the great British public

require at least a generation in which to become aware of a new idea, and it was not treating them fairly to expect them to notice an upstart gospel with no more than five years to its credit. Who was Henry George anyhow? Was he not a foreigner and, in addition, an agitator? Now, had the meeting been called to hear Mr. Dan Leno . . . The enterprise was not, however, a complete failure, for George was able to meet friendly local journalists, and many public men of the town, and his visit gave encouragement to those who had been sensible enough to hear him. Henry George was a portly, dapper little man, with a fine head and a fluent tongue, and the movement which he started may yet be destined to make a striking contribution to the well-being of nations.

Among the public men I met and heard at this period was Mr. Auberon Herbert, who talked to us on 'The Politician in Trouble about his Soul'; but his theories seemed to me to be as idle as the wind. I also heard with great pleasure Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Leonard Courtney advocate proportional representation, a theory, the democratic quality of which held me captive until greater acquaintance with public affairs taught me that, however important it might be that minorities should be adequately represented in Parliament, it was of even greater importance that the electorate should return a Government with the power necessary to govern.

I also had the privilege of arranging meetings which were addressed by some of the writers of the well-known Fabian Essays, the material of which had previously been tried out on various platforms. Together with other members of the Fabian Society those who spoke in Nottingham were Mrs. Besant, Hubert Bland, and Sydney Olivier (now Lord Olivier), and their addresses aroused considerable local comment. They also stimulated an increased propaganda on behalf of Socialist principles. Meetings were arranged, Socialist tracts were distributed, and every known literary and discussion circle was 'permeated' on behalf of 'the cause.' Small bands of young crusaders, including myself, carried the glad tidings to the 'heathen' living outside the borough area. So far as I remember we made no members and founded no societies: we worked in the faith that if we cast our Socialist bread upon the waters, we should see it again after not too many days. No body of young believers ever enjoyed themselves in greater measure; and none of us ever considered that his time had been wasted. Our practice was to ride to the area to be enlightened on

the old type of 'penny-farthing' bicycle, from the saddle of which, the machine being kept in the perpendicular by comrades standing on either side, I and others preached the new gospel. I think that most of the people who came to listen to us thought that we were just naughty and irresponsible youths, engaged in a new form of juvenile mischief; and they were usually tolerant; but once or twice it became advisable that those who held the machine, from which with an evangelist's fervour I preached the brotherhood of man, should give it a hurried start in order that the panting orator might escape from the impending wrath. Much of my platform apprenticeship was spent in pioneer activities of this kind, and I learned a great deal from the discipline that I thus received.

In the early eighties I visited London for the first time in order to attend conferences or demonstrations in Trafalgar Square or elsewhere, in connection with Bradlaugh's exclusion from Parliament, and in 1886, when his right to sit had been acknowledged, I, in the company of Mr. Anderson, made my first unforgettable visit to the House of Commons. Our orders for the Strangers' Gallery bore Bradlaugh's signature and, after waiting for many hours in St. Stephen's Hall, we were fortunate enough, just before the House rose, to hear Mr. Gladstone address it, and on our way out we overtook him as he walked slowly on his way home to Downing Street. I remember that at the time I was alarmed because he did not appear to be protected against possible assault, but the police have their own methods of being both vigilant and obscure, and my fears were probably unfounded.

As I sat in the Gallery of the House of Commons on that occasion I had no thought that I should one day be privileged to sit on its green benches and take a modest part in its work. The impression that the House then made upon me was profound, and my respect for its authority has never diminished. I do not belong to those who think it clever to decry the Mother of Parliaments, and to this day I never enter the Palace of Westminster without a feeling of reverence for its great traditions, or without a thrill of hope for its future work. When I made my maiden speech in the House of Commons, on the 30th November 1922 I ventured to say: 'In rising to address the House for the first time, my mind goes back to a night in the eighties when, after many hours of weary waiting, a very happy boy from the Strangers' Gallery had the great privilege of hearing Mr. Gladstone introduce the Franchise Bill from that Box. On that occasion the House of Commons put a spell upon

me, which has not only endured, but has increased with the years. I have always felt that if a man brings to its service his best gifts, and leaves behind him everything that is selfish and uncharitable, there is no place on this earth where he may render better service. It is with some humility, therefore, in the presence of those memories, that I ask for the kind indulgence of the House.'

About this time there was formed in Nottingham a Parliamentary Debating Society, or 'Mock Parliament,' the proceedings of which were conducted, as closely as possible, on the lines of the House of Commons. There was a 'Government,' and an 'Opposition,' composed respectively of members of the Liberal and Tory parties, while a few Socialists formed a small, defiant, and very vocal group. There were even one or two members with the cross-bench mind. Sir Samuel George Johnstone, the town clerk of the borough, acted as 'Mr. Speaker,' in wig and gown complete, and among the members was the Rev. Dr. Bagshaw, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, who, with great success, set himself the congenial task of arousing our Socialist wrath. The reverend gentleman was portly in body, scholarly in mind, very orthodox, but with no trace of that Christian humility which is said to prompt a man to turn the other cheek to the one already smitten. I cannot recall that he ever made any useful contribution to the debates, and he was not free from worldly guile; but he was a good-tempered man, and he was both provoking and amusing. There were also among the members of the society, Anglican clergymen, nonconformist ministers, barristers and solicitors, doctors, merchants, and several of the local leaders of the two dominant political parties. Some of my earliest attempts at responsible political speaking were made in the debates which it promoted. There existed at that time an unfortunate young man, named Benson, known as the 'Jubilee Plunger,' who, without ability, without rendering any public service, without having done an hour's labour in his life, had, within a few years, squandered in riotous living the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. The revelations of his extravagance and final collapse made a great sensation, and I attempted to contrast the luxurious conditions of this young man's life, who had been cursed with riches which he had not earned, and which he did not know how to use, with the circumstances of hundreds of thousands of underpaid or unemployed workmen, upon whom there had been imposed a debasing and unmerited poverty. These contrasts were made in connection with a motion before the

'House,' which urged a reduction in the rate of wages as a necessary condition of England retaining her foreign trade, and the 'Speaker' was good enough to send me a note of congratulation on my speech, an act of courtesy which greatly encouraged me, and gave me a pleasure which was only surpassed when, many years later, I received a similar note from the Speaker of the House of Commons.

It was perhaps natural that as soon as possible we should wish to put youthful enthusiasm to the test of a parliamentary election, and the opportunity to do so was not long delayed. The annual conference of the Amalgamated Union of Engineers was held in Nottingham in the autumn of 1884, and among the delegates who attended it was one whose name was to become famous as the leader of the great dock strike of 1889, and later as the first workman to become a member of a British cabinet. Mr. John Burns was then a member of the Social Democratic Federation, and one of its most effective speakers. He was then about twenty-five years of age, and in the full strength of his young manhood. His power as a popular street-corner orator was probably unequalled in that generation. He had a voice of unusual range, a big chest capacity; and he possessed great physical and nervous vitality. His method of attracting a crowd was, immediately he rose to speak, and for one or two minutes only, to open all the stops of his organ-like voice, roar like a bull of Bashan, when the crowd, always fickle and ready to desert for any diverting novelty any one to whom they were listening, would immediately leave other meetings and crowd round his platform with an eagerness which could not have been more marked had he been giving away something that they greatly desired. The crowd once secured, his vocal energy was modified, but his vitality and masterful diction held his audience against all competitors. On the Sundays preceding and following the conference, he addressed meetings in the Great Market Place, the result of which was that he became the 'Social Democratic' candidate for West Nottingham, and between then and the general election, which occurred in the following year, he often visited the town.

Burns would be the last person in the world to claim that a shrinking modesty was his chief characteristic, and his endeavours to cultivate that captivating quality were always under strict control. He had self-assurance to a degree which too easily made enemies, and not infrequently embarrassed his friends. Those who did not know him well were apt to mistake his physical exuberance and

his congenital egotism for mere vanity and shallowness. Assertive by nature, aloof and superior in bearing, he had too little consideration for the work and character of other people who were as able and as sincere as himself, and those who were not with him were, so far as he was concerned, outside the pale. He lashed Tories and Liberals with equal vigour, and to those who still regarded Liberalism as the only citadel of political righteousness, he was the flagrant apostle of sin. His stinging invective aroused enthusiasm in his admirers and fury in his victims. Gladstone, Harcourt, Chamberlain, Bradlaugh—everybody who was outside the S.D.F.—were impeached as the disguised enemies of the people.

It is easy to criticize this method of propaganda, and to contrast it with methods which are modern and more kindly. At that time it was probably as necessary as it was effective. The people were so stupefied politically that only shock-methods could arouse them from their torpor. I was a boy of twenty at the time, and I took the chair at most of the meetings that Burns addressed. It was great fun, and I enjoyed it immoderately. Sometimes, however, I look back upon our gay temper with misgiving. Naturally we claimed that our candidate was reluctantly bearing the workers' standard at the request of a large number of the downtrodden and impatient electors of the division; but so far as I remember John Peacock, Tom Proctor (later a Labour candidate for Davenport), Sam Whalley, and myself, were the only people primarily concerned, and I doubt whether more than two of us were voters, either in the Western Division of Nottingham or elsewhere. The resentment of the working-class Radicals against Burns and his associates was almost unbelievable. We were accused of every crime short of actual sacrilege. Liberalism at that time was still regarded as an audacious political enterprise, and it considered that the votes of the workers were its own by right; it believed that the common people had been created that they might vote for Liberalism, and that the working-class vote was a sacred preserve into which no Socialist poacher should be allowed to put his unclean feet. Almost the nicest thing said of us was that we had been bought with Tory money to oppose Colonel Charles Seely, a rich and greatly respected local coalowner, in order that an equally rich Conservative might win the seat. Old personal friends regarded me as a traitor to my class, and treated me as such, thereby adding political to the religious ostracism that I knew so well.

Burns was a magnificent candidate. His personal character was beyond reproach; he was an abstainer and a non-smoker; I never heard an improper word come from his mouth; he represented the very best traditions of the class to which he belonged. Whatever criticism may be made of his public work, the working classes owe to him, and to leaders such as Arthur Henderson, Thomas Burt, and others, a lasting debt of gratitude in that, at a time when it was unusually important that they should do so, they set an example in personal character, in private and public fidelity, which was beyond praise. Our satisfaction with the election was not lessened when the result was known. We polled 596 votes, an achievement which filled us with pride when we learned that at the same election, Jack Williams, who had chosen to beard the plutocratic lion in his lair, had polled 27 votes at Hampstead, and Fielding 32 at Kennington.

The funds for the election campaign of Burns were for the most part provided by Mr. Hudson, the soap manufacturer, but the expenses of the candidates for Hampstead and Kennington admittedly came from the Tory Party. Mr. Hyndman later attempted to defend this on the ground of *non olet*, meaning that when the money reached the Socialist treasury it did not smell different from money derived from Liberal, or any other, sources. Whatever may be the ethical status of this transaction, it was as deplorable an illustration of feeble strategy as political leaders had ever provided. For the vast majority of the British working classes believed that money so obtained did smell, and that offensively. The day before the election, the Tory Party, with characteristic incapacity, believed that the Socialist propaganda had been sufficiently effective to be worth buying in order to dish the Liberals; the day after the election it knew, what we were already well aware of, that the British head is almost invulnerable to new ideas, and that it had put its money on a feeble horse. The S.D.F. on its part 'had presented the Tory Party with 57 votes at a cost of about £8 apiece. What was worse, they had shocked London Radicalism, to which Tory money was an utter abomination. It is hard to say who cut the more foolish figure, the Tories who had spent their money for nothing, or the Socialists who had sacrificed their reputation for less than nothing. . . . The disaster was so obvious that there was an immediate falling off from the Federation, on the one hand of the sane tacticians of the movement, and on the other of those out-and-out insurrectionists who repudiated political action alto-



HENRY GEORGE

Elliott & Fry

gether, and were only too glad to be able to point to a discreditable instance of it.'¹

Both the Socialist League and the Fabian Society passed condemnatory resolutions, that of the latter body affirming on the 4th December 1885: 'That the conduct of the Council of the Social Democratic Federation in accepting money from the Tory Party in payment of the election expenses of Socialist candidates is calculated to disgrace the Socialist movement in England.'²

At Nottingham the polling day did not pass without trouble. Mr. Humphrey, in his *History of Labour Representation*, says that 'there was great excitement, and windows were broken. The police made an attempt to clear the market place and, the crowd offering resistance, drew their staves and charged. The people retaliated with stones, and many were injured and removed to the hospital. At nine in the evening the mayor telegraphed for the hussars, which were stationed at Leeds, and the troops were ordered to be in readiness. There were, however, not sufficient horse-boxes on the railway to convey the mounts, and the troops were unable to move. When this news was received at Nottingham an urgent appeal was sent to Sheffield, and about 108 men of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Regiment left Sheffield for Nottingham where a serious riot had broken out.'³

Like thousands of other people I was in the market-place at the time, waiting for the declaration of the poll. There was a good deal of shouting, and there may have been some disorder. The 'Nottingham lambs' were traditionally vocal and impetuous at election times; but I saw little that need have caused alarm, and I was convinced that had the local magistrates not lost their nerve and ordered a police attack on the crowd, there would have been no serious trouble. I remember seeing — I could not hear — the reading of the Riot Act from the windows of the Exchange by one of the magistrates, probably by Alderman Gripper (we called him 'King Agrippa,' because he was the leader of the Liberal Party). I escaped personal injury when the charge was made, but the police pursued people into the side streets and needlessly struck them and, in Dilke's Yard, in Chapel Bar, I was later attacked while standing in the doorway of the house in which I lodged. The police as well as the magistrates had lost their heads.

¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Fabian Tract* 41.

² E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 52.

³ pp. 92-3.

My political opinions during the next five years were greatly influenced by the principal of the University College, Professor Symes, whose lectures on literature, history, and other subjects, I regularly attended. He was a cultured man, with a scholarly grasp of the subjects which he taught, and it was under his guidance that I began seriously to study the science of political economy.

Some time before this phase of my education began I had become acquainted with one with whom I was to be long and intimately associated, and whose influence on my life and outlook was to be decisive. Mr. C. H. Grinling was at that time in Holy Orders as a curate at St. James's Church in Nottingham, the vicar of which was the Rev. A. H. Baynes, afterwards chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, later Bishop of Natal, and now still active at the cathedral church of Birmingham. In a sermon preached in the course of his duties, Grinling had commented adversely on the low rate of wages then being paid to girl and women workers in the lace industry, thereby bringing upon himself the anger of all those, and that meant nearly everybody, who believed that the pulpit should be silent on the things of this world. The preacher was reminded of the attitude towards industrial problems which both episcopal respectability and commercial self-righteousness required. It was not the business of the Church to take sides on such matters—at least not on the side of the workers. Grinling's name had, as a result of his sermon, become known to and respected among the working-class leaders of the town, and in due course I made his acquaintance, and there thus began a friendship which has grown in understanding throughout the forty-eight years which have since passed. Grinling has known more of my thoughts, hopes, and anxieties than any other human being, and he is the one person I have ever known with whom I could talk unreservedly on matters of conduct and conscience, without embarrassment or the fear of being misunderstood. I have rarely differed from him without the feeling that I, and not he, might be in the wrong.

Before he came to Nottingham Grinling had been trained as a social worker at Toynbee Hall, by Canon Barnett, and he brought with him, not merely an intelligent sympathy for the poor in body and spirit, but also a quite unusual appreciation of the worth and significance of new ideas. Moreover, he had a reserve of moral fervour and an idealism upon which, to my great advantage, I have often drawn in days of depression and fatigue. My indebtedness to him for encouragement when my spirit drooped, and for

many gifts of faith and friendship, is greater than I can here acknowledge.

One of the earliest decisions that came out of my discussions with Grinling at that time, was that a man must prepare himself for political and social work with as much diligence and care as for any other of life's duties, and that the second-best would simply not do. We agreed that the commendable political life must be based upon exact knowledge of the problems awaiting solution, patient sympathy for the victims of social disorder, and, above all, the sense of a vocation. Arnold Toynbee's writings further impressed me with the need for self-dedication in the political as well as in the religious field. I had then no notion of a political career for myself. There was no goal at which I wished to arrive. I gladly surrendered myself to the call to duty as I saw it without ever asking where it would lead me. I hope that it is not immodest for me to say that, throughout my life, I have never used the causes that interested me for personal ends: they have always used me: and that may be the reason why, throughout my adult life, I have been radiantly happy in my work.

My intellectual appetite at this period of my life was altogether insatiable, and I read far more than I could assimilate. But it was already clear to me that, if I wished to do political work of any kind, I must prepare myself for it with the same diligence with which I had approached religious and other questions, and I therefore readily joined Grinling in a small conspiracy to induce as many as possible of the young political thinkers of the town to attend the courses on political economy, conducted by Professor Symes at the University College. We thus provided him with the largest number of students that the dismal science had hitherto attracted, but their character must at times have caused him some embarrassment. In the discussions that followed the lectures, or in the comments made on the papers I wrote for him, Professor Symes turned many of my theories inside out, and sometimes, even where he approved of my conclusions, he showed that my arguments did not support them. Very frequently I emerged from these mental encounters in a condition which reminded me of the 'ruins' concerning which Marie Lloyd used to assure us that 'Cromwell knocked them about a bit.' One of the tragedies of a politician's life is that facts so frequently shatter his theories; but in my case the rigid discipline of class-work, under the direction of a fine and sympathetic mind, taught me that economic questions should be

approached from the standpoint of knowledge as well as of feeling, and I count the experience that I gained in those studies as providing a satisfactory foundation for all my subsequent political activities.

About this time Grinling left Nottingham to become the secretary of the Woolwich Charity Organization Society, and at the beginning of the year 1890, to my surprise and great satisfaction, he invited me to join him in his work. The wages at the beginning were to be only twenty-five shillings per week, but I had no hesitation in accepting the post offered me. The work interested me, and it promised a close acquaintance with the general problem of poverty with one aspect of which I was already painfully familiar. Moreover, I was glad to leave a town in which I had undergone miserable experiences, and on Good Friday, in the year 1890, I mounted my old 'penny-farthing' bicycle, and pedalled my way from Nottingham to Woolwich, one of whose members of Parliament I was afterwards to become.

CHAPTER V

LONDON, WOOLWICH, AND THE C.O.S.

A once established opinion, however delusive, can hold its own front from age to age.—SIR E. B. TYLOR.

THE change from the restricted life of a Midland town to the wider opportunities of London was both welcome and, for a time, disconcerting. The warmer temper and the busier life of the metropolis helped to create in me the feeling that a new, and perhaps kindlier, chapter in my life had begun. Removed from the old environment I felt a refreshing sense of relief. This feeling of liberation is probably experienced by every young man when he goes forth alone into the world to stand or fall by his own energies and will. Be that as it may, the spell which London put upon me was immediate and decisive, and it has persisted undiminished to this day. I have known people who yearned for the pleasures and experiences of other cities and lands, but London has always been good enough for me; and I seldom return to it, after even a short absence, without experiencing something of the excitement that was associated with my first visit to its teeming streets. To live and work in London meant that I should be able to see, and hear speak, men with national reputations, and that new opportunities for self-development would present themselves.

There was also the attraction of the work to which I had been called. I knew, far better than any economist in the land, what poverty and unemployment meant in physical and mental suffering; but there were other phases of the problem which could be fully understood only by personal contact with many of its victims, and the work of the Charity Organization Society provided the opportunity for obtaining this understanding. The meagre wages of twenty-five shillings per week that I was paid required that every penny of personal expenditure should be subjected to the closest scrutiny, for I began my life in London with a rule which I have never broken, viz. that no matter how small might be the margin of my income when bare physical needs had been provided for, a calculated portion of it should be set apart as a reserve for any

emergency which might arise. By the 5th September 1892 I had saved the sum of ten pounds with which I opened an account in the Post Office Savings Bank, into which I paid a weekly sum until in November 1896, after six years of thrifty effort, I had a capital of one hundred pounds. The saving of that first hundred pounds required an almost heroic self-denial.

The work of the C.O.S. involved a detailed study of many thousands of individual and family circumstances, and this afforded me, as I had anticipated, a rare opportunity of seeing the problem of poverty at close quarters, and of measuring its influence upon many types of human character. As conducted by Grinling, the Woolwich branch of the C.O.S. became a centre for the social endeavour of the borough, and the daily procession of the distressed and damaged victims of social disorder who visited it, made it the best social school then available for those who desired to understand as well as to help the poor. Many aspects of the work were depressing beyond belief, and my faith in human nature had to be sustained by daily recourse to proved sources of spiritual renewal. The greatest danger to which a social worker is subjected is the adverse influence which his calling may have upon his own soul. It is so easy for him, gradually and unconsciously, to drift into a purely critical and negative attitude, to become a clever social detective instead of a sympathetic helper, and the number of those whose practical experience has led them to believe that 'the poor in a loomp is bad,' is one of the by-products of the social disease. One had, of course, to be on guard against the plausible liar and the experienced mendicant.

In theory the C.O.S. employed its agents to make the necessary inquiries respecting those who applied for help, and their responsibility was limited to supplying a correct report of the discovered facts, the judgment to be based upon them being a matter for the committee, and I never heard that any C.O.S. committee outside Woolwich ever sought or desired the advice of its 'inquiry agent' respecting the treatment of the cases that he had investigated. The committee of the Woolwich Society was, however, from the standpoint of C.O.S. theory, woefully unorthodox, for not only did it frequently invite the personal opinion of its officer, but on occasions when his duties made it possible it invited him to attend its meetings and take part in its deliberations.

The orthodox C.O.S. theory was that any one seeking assistance should be received by a 'voluntary' helper, but never by a paid

worker, such as its inquiry agent. At Woolwich this practice was not always observed. It would be entirely wrong to suggest that the voluntary workers who were properly trained were not altogether suitable for a task which required not merely knowledge of human frailties, but also wise judgment, deep sympathy, patience, tact, and insight. But the C.O.S. assumption that a paid worker could not possess those qualities was purely archaic. I have known voluntary workers who possessed them to a quite remarkable degree: I have also known some, the sole quality of whose service was that it was well meant and cost nothing. I remember that this matter was discussed at one of the annual conferences of the society, held at Rochdale in the nineties, when the late Canon J. M. Wilson, sometime Head Master of Clifton College, a scholarly and tolerant man, thought it right to the conference to place the work of the 'agent' who was 'employed' in contrast with the help given by the voluntary worker, and he used the illustration of the prophet who sent his servant Gehazi in his name, but who, because of the incapacity of his 'servant,' was himself compelled to give the help required. Talk of this kind was not pleasant for the paid workers who were in attendance to hear, but none of them, except myself, ventured to protest. I knew the Bible fairly well at that time, and to the consternation of some of the 'prophets' who were present, I reminded the conference that the presumably paid servant Gehazi, on one of the occasions when he was doing the prophet's work, contracted leprosy, and that this danger to health might be remembered when, in their name, their servants made daily visits to foul slums and fever-stricken houses.

I had not the least doubt that, taken as a whole, the case work of the C.O.S. was not only well done, but was on the right lines. Effective criticism of the work of the society, as I knew it forty years ago, was not that it always inquired and seldom helped; or that it never helped until after prolonged inquiry and delay. That kind of criticism was itself based upon rumours which were accepted without inquiry as to their truth. The experienced social worker knows that the kind of help that is the least likely to rescue a family from distress is often that for which urgent and immediate application is made. The fundamental need, which is frequently not understood, even by the distressed applicant, must be ascertained and dealt with, for it is beyond question that not he who gives thoughtlessly, but he who conscientiously 'considers' the poor, is the wisest helper.

The case work of the C.O.S. appeared to me to be as commendable as its social philosophy was questionable. That its work was done with great knowledge and devotion is beyond doubt; but sometimes it appeared to me to be the enthusiasm of negation. It believed that the poor should be protected from the demoralization of indiscriminate charity, and that only one thing could be worse than the planless generosity of the individual, and that was help, in any form, by the State. The sin of sins was to be moved to bestow gifts upon the beggar at the door, or in the street, while virtue consisted in helping the C.O.S. to spread its fierce gospel of personal self-reliance. These impressions of the social philosophy of the C.O.S. were formed two generations ago, and may not correctly represent its present position.

The experience that the work of the society gave to me has been of the greatest value to me throughout my political life, for it taught me much that no school or university could have supplied. As a preparation for a life destined to be spent in various forms of public service it was invaluable, and it provided facts and standards by which I was able to check my own political and social theories. Every day for seven or eight years I had to consider in detail the problems presented by the ever-flowing stream of cases that applied for help, and these included all kinds of human frailties, physical, mental, and moral deficiencies, disease, laziness, love, jealousy, confidence, and suspicion and, most important of all, the mysteries of the human personality. No standard diagnosis could be applied, because each case presented a special problem and revealed, in varying proportions, physical, mental, and moral poverty, and each showed the influence, sometimes good and sometimes evil, of heredity, environment, occupation, habit, and training.

The inefficient attempts of applicants to deceive, to hide faults of character or circumstance, to endow themselves with unfamiliar virtues, were a daily experience, and their inability to state in precise language even the commonest experiences, showed that what an inexperienced social worker might possibly have regarded as wilful falsehood was due in part, but not always, to a restricted vocabulary, and to ignorance of the exact value of the words and phrases used. These cases were by far the most difficult to treat. The fluent and experienced liar, who knew exactly what he was doing and saying, was comparatively easy to deal with; his character was as obviously revealed as if the word 'impostor' had been written all over him.

While remaining strictly loyal to the declared principles and purposes of the C.O.S., the Woolwich committee made innovations in regard to method which alarmed the headquarters of the society, and in due course this resulted in Grinling's retirement from the secretaryship. His successor, Mr. H. V. Toynbee, was sent to Woolwich with the mandate immediately to restore the society to the severe social orthodoxy which then found favour. He was exactly suited for his task, and he soon brought to an end both the kindlier practice of the society and my own connection with it.

During the time that I worked in Woolwich my reading was extended from purely scientific and religious subjects to economic theory, industrial history, and other fields of thought. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* was then accepted as a standard work, and this, together with the historical researches of Thorold Rogers, and industrial historians such as Cunningham, occupied a great deal of my time. I read most of the works of the classical economists from Adam Smith to Marshall, but I found the whole subject baffling and unsatisfactory. The leading authorities among the economic theorists appeared to be incapable of a clear-cut opinion about even the smallest issue, and they offered little help to the busy politician or business man, who had not the time either to master their conflicting propositions, or to allow for the emphatic qualifications they attached to even quite minor conclusions.

About this time I began to study with enthusiasm philosophy and ethics, to which I was increasingly attracted. I read some Aristotle and Plato, and also such summaries of both ancient and modern philosophy as were then available in the English tongue. The *History of Philosophy*, by George Henry Lewes, was the most easily obtainable, and it became for a time one of my favourite books. I began the study of ethics with Professor J. H. Muirhead's little manual, *The Elements of Ethics* (1892), and followed this with doses of Leslie Stephen, Henry Sidgwick, John Stuart Mill (*Utilitarianism*), Hume, and T. H. Green. Professor Bernard Bosanquet was one of the most socially reactionary-minded among the authorities of the C.O.S. at that time, and I distrusted his judgments on these questions too much to induce me to do more than merely look at his philosophical writings. I tried hard to appreciate Auguste Comte, but failed completely. My studies at this time also included the elements of anthropology, and the structure of primitive society, and I read the well-known works of Sir Henry Maine (*Village Communities* and other books), L. H.

Morgan's *Ancient Society*, É. de Lavelaye's *Primitive Property*, J. F. McLennan's *The Patriarchal Theory*, and Westermarck's *The History of Human Marriage*.

I also learned to appreciate literature of a more general kind. The poets, especially Shelley, Wordsworth, and Longfellow, greatly impressed me, and I read a good deal of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and George Eliot.

As this is a record of my social activities and my mental and spiritual development, and not a defence of my opinions, I must confess that I more than once tried to read Sir Walter Scott, who, however, always failed to arouse my interest; but I hasten to make my peace with Scotland by assuring it of my complete devotion to Robert Burns. I too had been reared on the land, and like him, had followed the plough, and I thus had an introduction to his poems that is denied to those whose hands have never been soiled with the earth, and who have never known the sweetness of its breath after spring and summer showers. Much of my reading during this period appeared to be unrelated to the problems of political and social life which I was endeavouring to face, but I later realized that it helped to form a basis and a background for my thoughts concerning them.

The main influence upon my mind came, however, not from the philosophers or the economists, but from the 'humanists,' and I read a good deal of Ruskin who, notwithstanding the grace of his literary style, appealed to me less than other writers of that school. The three prophets to whom I was most deeply and permanently indebted were Carlyle, Emerson, and, perhaps most of all, Mazzini. Carlyle half frightened me, with his thundering phrases, his taboos, and his dyspeptic peevishness. Emerson, on the other hand, was a most comforting person to live with. He approached the problems of life with a perpetual smile, and the sunny optimism of his essays always inspired and consoled. It was to him that I went whenever life's burdens were heavy, and I seldom went in vain. It is the fashion among the not very 'bright young things' of the present day to assert that they do not know what Emerson means. I quite believe them. I sometimes think that they do not know what life and duty mean. I do not know what the stars mean, but I know that to gaze upon them in the stillness of the night is an inspiring experience.

Emerson himself made no claim to be regarded as a philosopher, or even as a consistent teacher. The philosopher endeavours to

keep separate truths within the limits that he assigns to them in the structure that he aims to build, whereas Emerson's writings are a mosaic of sentences that do not always make consistent reading. He was not a writer for the scholar or the logician: and he is perhaps best appreciated by the quick and generous mind of understanding youth. What attracted and held me captive to him was not merely the wisdom of his oracular sentences, but also the sweet sanity of his character and teaching. There are few who would contend that his thought was steady or consistent. 'A foolish consistency,' he said, 'is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has nothing to do. . . . Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day.' Unlike many of the religious and moral teachers of the time, Emerson's wisdom was of the kind that generated mental vitality and will. 'There is,' he proclaimed, 'a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better or worse as his portion. . . . Men distrust their own thoughts and intuitions just because they are theirs, until 'to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.' To the young he said that 'he who would be a man must be a nonconformist'; he must 'hold Plato at arm's length, say to him: "You have been pleasing the world for two thousand years; see whether you can please me."'¹ This gospel of spiritual self-reliance was, perhaps, the most precious thing that I learned from him. I need not explain here why I did not in the end accept the transcendental view of life and religion which he taught; but he was one of the great formative influences in my life, and I often think of him as the rightful heir to his own gracious tribute to his friend Thoreau: 'Wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.'

Joseph Mazzini influenced me profoundly, but in a different way. As a revolutionist he lacked worldly sagacity; but it was not alone his insurgent passion for a united Italy that impressed me: it was his sustained insistence upon the gospel of duty, as opposed to the popular demand for rights. Young men were incited to revolt against tyranny and bad social conditions, because it was

¹ Emerson's advice to Oliver Wendell Holmes, junr. (*Life of Holmes*, by Silas Bent).

their duty to liberate themselves from whatever hindered their spiritual development. A man must live in the light of his own enlightened conscience, because to follow any other course would be to betray that which was most sacred within him. Mazzini also helped me towards a rough working rule for personal decisions as between right and wrong. If a man feels himself impelled towards a given course of action, especially if it is against the accepted conclusions of his neighbours, he must subject his conscience to the strictest interrogation, and take whatever steps may be necessary to ensure that his mind is adequately informed respecting the issue. Then, further to test his judgment, he must submit his decisions to the wisest men of his acquaintance, and if their judgment confirms his own, he may act with a reasonable assurance that what he proposes to do is right. In the end, however, he must, without hesitation and against all temptation, and regardless of whatever gain or penalty it may bring, obey the authority of his own conscience.

As a small tribute to the memory of one whom I regarded as among the greatest of modern prophets, and as an expression of my own indebtedness to him, I formed in 1912 a small but representative committee of English friends of Italy, and on the front of No. 5 Hatton Garden we had placed a memorial tablet in bronze, on which, in addition to a portrait of Mazzini, are the following words: 'In this house Giuseppe Mazzini, Apostle of Modern Democracy, inspired Young Italy with the Ideal of the Unity, Independence, and Regeneration of his Country.' The ceremony of inauguration was performed by the Italian Ambassador before a great crowd, which included Mrs. Hamilton King, the author of *The Disciples*, a lengthy poem, dealing with the struggle for Italian unity, and some Italians who had known Mazzini, and had themselves been taught by him.

For a long time following my departure from Nottingham my reading was fairly extensive, and covered a wide area of subjects, among which religious and social questions, and the story of the origin, growth, and structure of civilization, were the most prominent. I can remember the names of only a few of the books which then specially appealed to me. I read a good deal of Alfred Russel Wallace, Andrew Lang, Henry Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen, Sir John Seeley, and Thomas Hill Green. I was also attracted by General F. Forlong's *Rivers of Life*, Jane H. Clapperton's *Scientific Meliorism*, Walter H. Cassell's *Supernatural Religion*, William

James's *The Will to Believe* and *Varieties of Religious Experience*, A. J. Balfour's *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, Professor Flint's *Baird Lectures on Theism*, Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, Kidd's *Social Evolution*, Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, and, at a later period, the translated works of Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Harnack, and the available works of Professors J. S. Mackenzie, D. G. Ritchie, and Samuel Alexander. I also found the works of Henri Bergson, especially his *Creative Evolution*, stimulating reading, and I read with care most of the writings of Father Tyrrell. There were many other books, especially the modern poets, English, French, and German, that I read and greedily absorbed.

The daily habits of men are frequently the products of compulsion. Thus, a young man blessed with a happy home will be encouraged to spend his evenings with his own people; but a young man who is only a lodger in the house of a stranger will be expected to spend them outside. Thousands of young and lonely men so placed are driven to seek shelter and fellowship in public-houses, or even in more undesirable places: those who are lucky enough to discover the friendly welcome of a young men's club are fortunate indeed.

I never felt the least temptation to look for fellowship in the public-house, and, after my expulsion from the Unitarian school at Nottingham, I never again sought the precarious hospitality of another church. I had, in any case, arrived at intellectual conclusions that would have made this impossible. One of the proverbial sayings popular in my native village was that 'you can always do without that which you cannot get,' and my habits were consequently adapted to my opportunities. Nearly every night when classes were over, and when work was done, I sought both exercise and opportunities for reflection by wandering aimlessly through the crowded streets, and this apparently unfavourable environment provided my chief opportunity for undisturbed meditation.

I think that I can explain why, to me, this was comparatively satisfactory. An extemporary speaker has to train himself to be alone in the midst of a crowd: he is in the throng, but not of it. The multitude is about him; but he remains apart. It never occurred to me to go on a direct walk to a selected place. I liked to feel my feet on the pavements of a few known and well-lighted streets; although not consciously desiring company, I was certainly comforted and my brain stimulated by the mere presence of the

passing crowds. And there are few forms of rest and recreation that I enjoy more to this day, than a solitary walk among the hurrying throngs of London's streets. To justify this habit I fall back upon great names of the past. Did not old Sam Johnson have a similar weakness? 'Sir, when you have seen one green field, you have seen all green fields: let us take a walk down Fleet Street.' And did not Walt Whitman find peace and inspiration in the teeming streets of Manhattan?

During the years 1890-1900 I devoted much time to the task of training myself to become an acceptable public speaker, and I gave addresses in most of the London parks, and other speaking centres. In the summer season I spoke twice every Sunday, and it has been an invariable practice of mine since I began to give public addresses to repay the courtesy of such of the public as came to hear me by thinking carefully over what I wanted to say. I never scamped the work of preparation, and I never gave to an audience less than my very best. Whenever I saw people before me I asked myself the question: 'Why have they come to hear me speak, and what are they to take away with them as the wages of attention?' And it has sometimes happened, after I have done my very best, that a critic has told me that, having listened with care to what I had said, he was more deeply convinced than before that his conclusions were better than my own. Such an avowal always pleased me. I considered that to have stimulated in an intelligent man an increased respect for his own beliefs, was something achieved.

People whose personal qualifications give them no title to pass judgment, frequently decry the quality of 'soap-box oratory.' Upon that kind of public advocacy I offer my own opinion for what it is worth. I have heard some of the best, as well as some of the cheapest and meanest, speaking in the London parks that I have heard anywhere; and I have not seldom heard a speech delivered from a precarious platform erected at a street corner of a quality which was equal to anything that I ever heard in Parliament itself. The open-air meeting, as all practised speakers know, provides the best of all schools for the immature orator or debater. It gives him the same valuable discipline that games give to the schoolboy. The successful propagandist must acquire the habit of good temper, submit himself to the strong discipline of restraint; he must avoid exaggeration, be ready with relevant argument, quick with apt quotation, and be skilled in prompt and effective

repartee. At any moment he may be tested by a disturbing interjection, by a searching question, or by a critic with more experience and greater knowledge than himself, and the value of this kind of training is illustrated by the fact that the only speakers who have ever been able to hold their own against the Secularist and Socialist advocates of Hyde Park, have been those who received their own training in that same hard and practical school.

During the winter season, when open-air meetings were suspended, I endeavoured to hear speakers of many schools of thought, and the weekly lecture announcements were eagerly scanned for suitable opportunities. I heard the Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon at the Newington Tabernacle, and later the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker at the City Temple, but owing to my experience at the Unitarian chapel at Nottingham, I could not bring myself to visit Bedford Chapel to hear the Rev. Stopford Brooke. As I never, during this period, visited the Houses of Parliament, I could not then have had any conscious thought of a political career. My chief ambition was to become a creditable advocate of the principles that governed my own life, but as the iron law of circumstance involved six days' heavy work each week, the opportunities for systematic preparation for public speaking were neither many nor favourable.

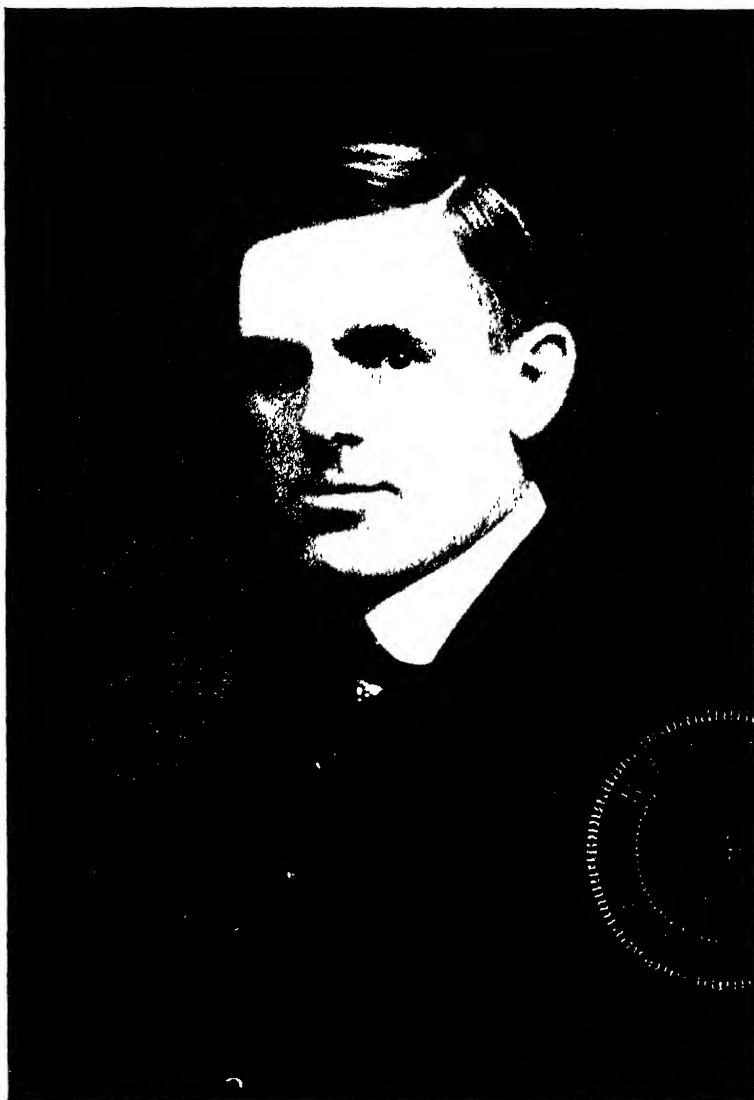
Whenever I found it possible to do so I attended the services of the South Place Ethical Society to hear Dr. Daniel Moncure Conway, Dr. Stanton Coit, and other well-known speakers, and later, the meetings of the West London Ethical Society, which were held at the Princes Hall in Piccadilly. In view of my subsequent relationship with the ethical movement in England it is perhaps worth recording that an inquiry that I made in 1893 as to whether, with my uncertain opinions, I was eligible for membership of the West London Ethical Society was not acknowledged. My official association with the ethical movement was, in consequence, delayed for some years. I also attended the Friday meetings of the Fabian Society, and among those whom I there met and heard speak were Grant Allen, Kropotkin, Stepniak, William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and Sidney Webb, together with Mrs. Besant, whom I already knew. I had also met Kropotkin on one of his visits to Nottingham when, because of my regard for him, I accepted from him my first cigarette, which I nevertheless abandoned as soon as his back was turned.

My own recreation at this period was an occasional visit to the

theatre, where I saw some of the greatest actors and actresses of the day. Among those whom I saw frequently were Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, John Toole, Wilson Barrett, and Mrs. Kendall. I also saw Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest tragedienne of her time, and possibly of any time, although one would like to forget her interpretation of the character of Hamlet. I never had any intellectual grasp of music, which I nevertheless greatly enjoyed, and, as the famous Royal Artillery Band was stationed at Woolwich, opportunities for hearing good music were seldom lacking.

During the years that I resided in Woolwich, from 1890 to the end of the century, I was associated with the earliest attempt to conduct, throughout the borough, Labour propaganda of a distinctly Socialist character. Most of the speakers who then had a national reputation spoke from our Sunday platform in Beresford Square, and among them were John Burns, Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, Will Thorne, Andreas Scheu, Herbert Burrows, Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling, Harry Quelch, and Henry Mayers Hyndman. The meetings were organized by a small group of Socialists, and the local speaking was mostly done by Robert Banner and myself. Banner was a widely read man, a Marxian in economics, and in politics an out-and-out social democrat, and together with a handful of local stalwarts, we laid the foundations on which the Woolwich Labour Party was afterwards built.

Throughout my connection with it, I endeavoured to be entirely loyal to the C.O.S., by whom I was employed, but my activities nevertheless alarmed a section of its local members, and an effort was made by one of the local clergymen to secure my dismissal; an effort immediately and effectively resisted by other clergymen who had more tolerant views. Prominent among these was the Rev. Canon J. W. Horsley, the vicar of Holy Trinity Church. He had served for a time as chaplain of the old Clerkenwell prison, and he was an ardent reformer on the lines of the Christian Social Union. Canon Horsley's greatest contribution to local well-being was his enthusiasm for sanitary reform, especially in the slum area of his own parish. In support of his campaign monthly meetings were held in the schoolroom attached to his church, and I began to attend these almost as soon as I went to the borough. The demands for structural improvement that we made were stoutly resisted by the property-owners concerned, whose pockets we subsequently emptied by forcing upon them repairs that were long overdue. I had many opportunities of estimating the zeal and courage of a



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man who was exactly fitted for the task that he had undertaken. Canon Horsley was, apart from Grinling, the first parson of the reformer type that I had met at close quarters: he had a forceful personality, he could be neither ignored nor intimidated, and where the health of the poor was concerned he never hesitated to publish the names of careless or recalcitrant property-owners. My duties took me into almost every house in his parish, where the sanitary conditions were indescribably bad, and I saw in detail the gradual cleansing of the area. We found it a hideous warren of vile slums, overcrowded tenements, doss-houses, and ill-drained dwellings, and we left it, after a few years of hard work which enriched the local builders and plumbers, a possible, if not a desirable, place in which to live.

Canon Horsley was both big in body and generous in his understanding of the position of those whose views he did not share. He knew something of the critical literature of the nineteenth century, and he was himself a vehement, if not a careful, controversialist. One of his recreative hobbies was the science of conchology, and on Saturday afternoons I frequently joined him on tramps in the country, when our time was divided between argument on social and religious questions and the collection of the shells of snails, and on occasion, when the verbal battle became fierce, I used playfully to accuse him of knowing far more about snails than about men. When he left the town to become the vicar of St. Peter's, at Walworth, everybody who admired enthusiasm, courage, and fidelity felt the loss of a stimulating friend and a most useful public servant.

Another fine type of parson, happily less rare to-day than forty years ago, was the Rev. Canon C. E. Escreet, the rector of Woolwich, who was a member of the Guild of St. Matthew, then openly recognized as a Socialist organization. He was the chairman of the local C.O.S. committee, and he was well aware of my own religious and social opinions. He was a wide-minded man, courageous and gentle in character, and he once exposed himself to some criticism and inconvenience by inviting me to address a Sunday afternoon meeting of the young men of his church on 'The Bible as a Human Document.' The occasion was seized upon by representatives of the Christian Evidence Society, to protest against an 'infidel' view of the Bible being placed before the 'innocent youth' of the town, under the patronage of the rector, whose business it was to protect them against the sin of unbelief. Both the rector

and his curate, the Rev. Walter Wragge, attended the meeting, and their contributions to the debate were at least as unorthodox as my own address. The Rev. Walter Wragge, who was also a member of the committee of the C.O.S., had been connected with Toynbee Hall, and he was a man of wide sympathies, with an active, tolerant mind. These three clergymen, together with Grinling, who was then no longer in Holy Orders, prevented the C.O.S. committee from being stampeded into action against myself because of my opinions.

The course of my life has been so widely separated from association with the Church, that I feel it to be both a privilege and a duty to emphasize the generous tolerance of these clergymen who courageously refused to impose economic penalties on opinions that they disliked.

The attitude of this new type of clergymen towards social questions was well illustrated at the time of a great strike of miners, which occurred at that period. Canon Escreet willingly became the chairman of a committee which had been formed to raise support for their wives and children, and Canon Horsley not only served on the committee, but offered the hospitality of his church for the proposed Sunday afternoon meeting, should the weather prevent it from being held in the open air. I acted as the honorary secretary, and we collected about eighteen pounds. I had the highest regard for these kindly and tolerant men, and their generous social activities, so different from those of the austere and unsympathetic theologians I had previously known, had a marked influence upon my own thought and advocacy. They were the courageous forerunners of a new type of clergymen whose numbers still happily increase.

In this connection it is worth recording that the Labour movement in Woolwich, in the early days before the formation of the Labour Party, received no public support from ministers of the nonconformist communions. It is not to be supposed that they were less aware of its virtues than were the clergy of the Established Church; the probable explanation of their shy detachment was that the greater independence of the clergyman enabled him to take part in work which might have brought upon themselves, dependent upon the goodwill of their congregations, troubles which they considered it prudent to avoid.

CHAPTER VI

A CHOICE OF WAYS

To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way, and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

JOHN OXENHAM.

THE reader of a personal record of a man's thought and activities, such as this book aims to present, will, of necessity, judge its incidents by the test of his own knowledge and experience of the world of to-day, which is, let him remember, quite different from the mostly forgotten world of two generations ago. He will forgive me, therefore, if I remind him of some of its grosser limitations.

The attitude which a man takes towards the social and political institutions of his age is generally determined by the nature of his appreciation of the facts that they present, and by the quality of his judgments concerning them. If he is mentally indolent, naturally selfish, and spiritually torpid in character; if he accepts without question or resentment the facts of the social world in which he lives, he will find himself one of a complacent multitude whose number is legion; if, however, he is alert in mind, creative in character, and impatient of social inequality and disorder, he will work in isolation, be misrepresented, and possibly persecuted, and he may well become to other men one of those intolerable bores of whom is the salt of the earth.

I cannot know how the social conditions which prevailed when I was a young man would affect the minds of young people if they existed to-day. Would they regard them as satisfactory, and accept them as inevitable and permanent? When they saw the sufferings, the material and spiritual poverty, of the toiling masses, the slave conditions under which they worked, the disease and vice and

ignorance associated with their lives, would they, like the priest and the Levite, pass by unmoved? Or, would they feel impelled to rise in revolt against the established order which, with shrewd audacity, declared these things to be the will of God, and try to reform, or destroy it? I dare not even guess. I can only avow that to thousands of the young men who lived half a century ago they were as a thorn in their flesh which was not to be endured.

A time arrives in the experience of nearly every young man of mind and character, when he has to face the question of what he intends to do with his life. What shall he aim to become? Does he wish to take a modest part in the duties of a troubled world, to become a lifter rather than a leaner, or does he propose to shape his life, body, sense, and soul, to the environment into which he has been born? The answer that he gives to these questions will decide whether he is to become a personality or a pensioner, and perhaps also whether he is to keep his conscience or his carriage. Should he decide to follow the prevailing conventions, and accept the teaching that the whole duty of man is to save his soul and vote Tory at elections, he may acquire great possessions, and even win the smiles of princes. But if these glittering rewards do not attract him, and he elects to follow the prophet rather than the profiteer, he is likely to receive the wages of unpopularity, to be derided, if not persecuted, and to have poverty for his bride.

The choice between these separate ways of life was certainly more difficult to make forty years ago than it is to-day, when the mental outlook of the world and the religious and social practice of our country have been so drastically changed. At the time that I had to face these great issues, social idealism was generally distrusted. The economists, especially those of the classical school, insisted that human conduct was determined solely by motives of personal gain; that business was business; that the commercial activities of men were only occasionally influenced by moral considerations, and that human beings would rarely act morally when so to act would be contrary to their economic interests. The 'economic man,' the 'average sensual man,' was presented as the witness of an enlightened civilization. His soulless economic individualism was commended as a brazen serpent to look upon which would bring social healing, personal and national well-being.

I think that at no time did I accept this rank jungle philosophy as a satisfactory guide to conduct, but I never underrated the strength of its appeal. I knew that the acquisitive passion in men

was an inherited tyranny which was always powerful and sometimes irresistible; but while I was compelled to recognize its power, I never acknowledged its supremacy, nor thought of it as being good. I might at times be beaten by it, but it was not a god that I could worship. And I have never doubted that my rejection of the 'beneficent private war' theory of life was altogether sound and commendable. This sordid doctrine did not give to human nature a square deal. For if man is not all good, neither is he all bad. In spite of all his failures man does sometimes fight successfully against the anti-social part of his inheritance, and, more often than his detractors realize, he follows his moral judgments, even when they are opposed to his economic interests. The history of our forefathers is happily full of examples of man's response to the call of his conscience: Jesus, Socrates, and Giordano Bruno did not live and strive for great possessions, and Father Damien did not serve, and die for, his leper brothers from motives of self-interest.

The choice between the two opposite theories of living on, or living for, humanity, was not a difficult one for me to make, for I never had any desire to become rich; nor was there any great goal, whether social, economic, or political, which I consciously desired to reach. The smiles of the socially powerful did not attract me, and I never wilted under their frowns. I quite certainly did not wish again to suffer the hardships of my adolescent years, and perhaps because of this I half sympathized with the self-denying enthusiast of the simple life who said: 'All that I ask for dinner is a nourishing soup, a portion of fresh and well-cooked fish, a bird of some kind, with a dainty sweet and dessert to follow. And of course coffee and a good cigar':

I care not much for gold or land:
Give me a mortgage here, and there—
Some good bank-stock—some note of hand,
Or trifling railroad share.
I only ask that Fortune send
A *little* more than I shall spend.¹

I was spared the agonies of doubt and of indecision, possibly because my pathway seemed to be so clearly indicated, and also because I felt a stern compulsion to follow what I saw. There was, therefore, neither merit nor demerit in my choice. I joyfully subordinated myself to, and placed myself at the disposal of, the causes that appealed to me, and I was glad to be used by them.

¹ O. W. Holmes, *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*.

The social conditions which so powerfully helped to shape my attitude towards the economic theories and the political organizations of the time revealed the existence of a very rich class and the unexampled prosperity of the nation on the one hand, and, on the other, the deep and chronic poverty of the wage-earning classes. Mr. Asquith declared in the year 1901 that 'every society is judged and survives according to the material and moral minimum which it prescribes to its members.' How did England then meet that noble test? What was her attitude in her most spacious days? She was, beyond challenge, the richest and most prosperous country in the world. Nothing like her commercial success had been seen before; her national obligations were comparatively small; her very veins appeared to be choked with gold. The *Spectator*, in 1882, shouted its pride before mankind. 'Britain as a whole,' it said, 'was never more tranquil and happy. No class is at war with society or the Government: there is no disaffection anywhere, the Treasury is fairly full, the accumulations of capital are vast.'¹

With what sense of moral responsibility did England then use these prodigious gifts? It would have been well within her power to have bred the healthiest, happiest, and most prosperous race of workers that the world had ever seen: what she did produce was an impoverished peasantry, a stunted and ill-nourished factory population, whose vitality was so undermined by bad housing, low wages, and poor food, that when the need for recruits arose to meet the emergency of the South African War, it was revealed that of the adult males who offered themselves for military training only thirty per cent could pass the necessary military tests. The 'cook's son,' at least, if not the 'duke's son and the son of the millionaire,' was found to be physically incapable of bearing 'the white man's burden,' either in Africa or at home.

In order that the reader may understand more clearly the level to which the wage-earners of the country had then sunk, it is essential to supply a few illustrations of the wages rates then prevailing.

The story of the wage and labour conditions which obtained in England before the rise of the modern Labour movement will scarcely bear the telling, and I cannot hope to make the reader understand the indignation which they aroused in my mind, nor the sacred rage with which I and thousands of other protesting men

¹ Quoted by E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 13.

set ourselves to amend them. Sir Robert Giffen, the eminent statistician, told the Royal Commission on Labour that 25 per cent of the adult workers of the United Kingdom were in receipt of wages of less than 20s. a week, and in 1907 the Board of Trade compiled a return of the earnings of agricultural labourers in the United Kingdom which showed that the average cash wage in England was 15s. 2d. or, with allowances, 18s. 4d. per week. In Dorset the rate was 12s. 9d., and in Middlesex 18s. 10d. Earnings in the cotton trade in 1906 were such that 40.4 per cent of the workers employed received less than 25s. per week, while 15.2 per cent of the men who worked full time in the woollen and worsted industry, and 49.1 per cent of those engaged in the jute industry, earned less than 20s. as a weekly wage, while as late as 1911 nearly 100,000 railway servants earned less than 20s. and 135,000 less than 25s. per week.¹

The economic position of the homeworkers was almost desperate beyond description, and I hesitate to indicate their earnings lest the figures should appear to be incredible. One of the factory inspectors, giving evidence before the Home Work Committee, stated that the following were the 'common rates of pay for certain classes of work in London: Boys' knickers, making throughout, 2d. per pair; men's coats, making throughout, 4d. to 9d.; vests, with 5 pockets, 3½d.; boys cotton blouses, 1s. 1d. a dozen.' He further stated that in Bristol trousers were made for 5d. to 8½d. per pair, common coats from 4d. to 8d.; while in Reading trousers were made throughout for 4d., 5d., and 6d. A young widow with two children was found to be making shirts at 8½d. a dozen. Her sewing cotton cost her 4d. a reel, one reel being required for three dozen shirts. By a special effort this woman could make three dozen shirts a day, an effort that could not, however, be maintained. Her house was stated by the inspector to be 'beautifully kept,' and her earnings varied from 5s. to 8s. a week.² Even lower levels than these were reached in the small hardware industry in Birmingham, where a competent hook-and-eye carder, during ten hours of constant work a day, even with the help of her children, earned a maximum sum of 4s. 3d. a week, the average being 3s. 2½d. For a gross of cards on each of which a gross of hooks and eyes had to be sewn, the rates varied from 8d. to 1s. 2d.

I cannot estimate the extent to which the reader of these pages

¹ See Philip Snowden, *The Living Wage*, p. 33.

² Constance Smith, *Wages Board*, p. 14.

will condemn the social conditions which allowed the evils that I have described to continue. I can only say that when I met them face to face they aroused in me a resentment which I found it difficult to control, and the mere recital of the details of the wage-slavery that then existed again inflames my blood. It did not in the least modify my anger when I was assured that these slave conditions represented the will of God rather than the neglect of men. My criticism of Christian doctrines may at times have appeared irreverent to believers; but at no time in my life was I guilty of blasphemy of that kind; and there have been innumerable occasions when the unconscious infidelity of the orthodox has filled me with disgust.

The industries that I have mentioned—and there were many others—were clearly parasitic upon the labour of working-class fathers, brothers, and husbands. But what of the women who had no male relatives, the young widows with children to support, and the lonely working girls? How did they live? We scarcely dared to inquire. Yet everybody knew the dangers to which they were exposed. The statesmen knew of them, the economists and politicians knew, and the Church knew; but there was no evidence that their complacent philosophy of life was seriously disturbed. Were not these wage-slaves the product of 'the beneficent private war,' to interfere with which would be to rob its half-starved victims of the virtue of self-reliance, and to endanger the welfare of the State?

What was the root cause of the indifference with which these deplorable conditions were viewed in a country whose internal wealth and missionary enthusiasm were beyond comparison? Neither I nor those who with me attacked the prevailing political institutions and parties with all the passion at our command assumed that British statesmen and manufacturers were more indifferent to human suffering than were those of other nations. A foreign observer, noting on the one hand the rates of wages which England paid to her workers, and on the other the substantial profits that she obtained from their labour, and noting further that her treasury was 'fairly full,' and that she had 'vast accumulations of capital,' and contrasting the misery of her workers with her missionary and imperialist zeal, might have concluded that the English were indeed a race of hypocrites. Had he arrived at such a conclusion he would have been completely mistaken.

The apparent indifference to human suffering of British econo-

mists and statesmen was based upon the fact that they regarded poverty and inequality as inevitable. The evils of the industrial system were not intended; but they were condoned, and men of the highest motives, such as Cobden and Bright, and noble women like Harriet Martineau resisted every attempt to improve the lot of the worker by factory legislation, because they sincerely believed that the system of 'free labour in a free market' was the best, both for the worker and for the nation. The general attitude towards State responsibility was sufficiently indicated by Bentham in his *Manual of Political Economy*:

'With the view of causing an increase to take place in the mass of national wealth, or with a view to increase the means either of subsistence or enjoyment, without some special reason, the general rule is that *nothing ought to be done or attempted by government*. The motto or watchword of government on these occasions ought to be — "*Be quiet.*"'

The economic individualism of the economists was accepted and popularized by the Church. Thus, 'the horrors of the unregulated factory, the mine, and the slum—made abstract in what was called "the natural rate of wages"—were defended by Ricardo and Nassau Senior among the intellectuals, by the Rev. Thomas Malthus and Archbishop Whately among the priests, as the last discoveries of the science of political economy, and part and parcel of the law of God as manifested in the doctrines of the Christian Church.'¹

The politicians and the statesmen were therefore warned by the economists of the danger of trying to interfere with the operations of what they regarded as an unalterable economic law. Every employer wished to be free to compete on the downward as well as on the upward way, because the downward way made smaller demands on his powers of reorganization, and avoided the necessity for improved processes.

When, therefore, I had to face these grave problems at the beginning of my political career, I found that the way of least resistance and indolent fatalism had been elevated to the dignity of a religious or philosophic creed. Human labour was simply a commodity like raw material, and it should be treated in precisely the same way. That the sweated worker had senses, feelings, and an immortal soul, or that he belonged to the race which had bred Shakespeare and Milton, was altogether irrelevant. Business was

¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*, p. 12.

business. The defenders of the prevailing order took shelter behind the bulwarks of economic science, and the manufacturers gladly accepted the situation as an expression of the will of God, which so conveniently operated in accordance with their own commercial interests.

The question that I had to decide on the threshold of my political life was therefore whether poverty and social disorder were an irrevocable infliction of God, or whether they could be ended or modified by knowledge, backed by the faith, the will, and the wise planning of men. Not as the result of an emotional impulse, but deliberately and with the sense of a vocation, I came to a conclusion which has always been as a light about my feet, the decision that it were far better to fail in the fight for a more excellent way of living, than to accept as the end of man's evolution upon the earth that sordid doctrine of the 'beneficent private war,' which prompted one man to climb upon the shoulders of his neighbour and try to remain there.

CHAPTER VII

THE ATTACK UPON ORTHODOXY

The World has fallen a prey to rogues because men, concerned to get into Paradise, bear their humiliations instead of revenging them.—MACHIAVELLI.

THE protest against the social conditions which prevailed in England during the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century took the separate forms of (1) a revolt against religious orthodoxy and ecclesiastical institutions, and (2) a passionate campaign against the capitalist system. The assault on orthodoxy was conducted in the main by the radical secularist; the attack on capitalism by both religious and free-thinking social democrats. These two attacking forces were only unconsciously brothers in arms, for the relationships existing between them were always strained and were frequently bitter. The secularists insisted that there could be no substantial social progress until the power of the priest and the Church, with their endeavours to divert the attention of poverty-stricken men from their earthly sufferings to the problematical consolations of a better world beyond the skies, had been broken. They insisted that if men continued to believe that this troubled world was merely a temporary and tiresome prelude to an eternity of bliss, the worker would continue to tolerate its hardships.

The social democrats, on the other hand, declared that Christian orthodoxy was already derelict and would soon disappear, and that by attacking it, the secularists were themselves guilty of diverting the attention of the workers from the one thing that mattered—the destruction of the capitalist system, and the establishment of an organized social democracy.

As I was then one of the few active workers who belonged to both parties, a good deal of my time was devoted to the somewhat hopeless task of trying to make peace between them. I had no doubt that up to a certain point the secularists were right in the position they took. As I explained in the preceding chapter, it appeared to me to be a necessary condition of social progress that men should completely renounce the belief that earthly ills were

permanent, and ordained by God as a punishment for man's first sin, and that this regularly administered opiate should be superseded by a belief in their own power to create a better social world. In other words, I considered that doubt as to the inevitability of existing social conditions was a necessary condition of progress. Slaves, for example, might never have been freed if men had continued to believe that slavery had the approval of God, and in-offensive women might still be burned at the stake had the belief persisted that 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' was a divine command. We young Socialists thought that we saw clearly what the majority of the clergy appeared not to see at all, viz. that questions like the housing of the people, the abolition of the slums, the profit-making traffic in drink, and the grudging expenditure in elementary education, were at bottom not merely political, but moral questions of the most profound significance; and we felt that a creed which ignored the claims of remedial politics, paid little attention to the influence of environment on character and personality, and whose contribution to the solution of these problems was limited to proclaiming better things in a world beyond the skies, was both a failure and a hindrance. This point of view is reaffirmed from a different standpoint in the latest work of Mr. Lionel Curtis. 'The most potent factor in raising or lowering the character of a people, in increasing or diminishing their sense of duty to each other, is the structure of the society in which they live. Politics is the art of so adapting the structure as to raise the sense of duty in each to all.'¹

It is difficult to-day, when so many able and devout clergymen are convinced Socialists, and are both workers and leaders in movements that demand drastic changes in the State, to realize the almost universal hostility to progressive ideals which prevailed among the clergy, even at the beginning of the present century. The clergy were then regarded by vast numbers of the intelligent working classes as being opposed to their political and social ideals, and they were openly despised as the dutiful menials of the possessing class. Since the beginning of the present century an entirely new type of clergyman has, however, arisen, although robust specimens of the older order are still numerous. Dr. W. R. Inge, for example, notwithstanding his scholarship and fine courage when dealing with purely theological questions, is almost medieval in his social outlook, and he has apparently never recovered from the

¹ Curtis, *Civitas Dei*, p. 179.

shock of his discovery that Jesus was a working carpenter, and that most of the Apostles earned their bread by manual labour.

But notwithstanding that the inherited class prejudice against Socialism and the Labour Party is still powerful, the reputation of the Church is saved by the records of a few of its great and courageous men. The workers of England rightly revere the names of Maurice, Kingsley, Westcott, Headlam, Escreet, Horsley, and hundreds of others who, against their own immediate professional interests, gave service and leadership to the people's cause.

Popular resentment against the Church forty years ago showed itself in a widespread demand for disestablishment, in ostentatious abstention from her ministrations, and in the growth of small dissenting congregations. The frontal attack on ecclesiasticism was made by the secularists, who criticized the Church, not only as a reactionary social institution, but as the defender of doctrines which were not only untrue, but also harmful.

In judging the character of the freethought criticism of that time, it is necessary to recall the nature of the doctrines against which the secularists fought, for during the last two generations the teaching of educated clergymen has changed almost beyond recognition. The attitude then adopted towards the Bible may be given as an illustration. Sir William Jones, an eminent Oriental scholar, honestly believed that 'either the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, all due allowance being made for a figurative Eastern style, are true, or the whole fabric of our national religion is false,' and an able clergyman declared that 'in all consistent reason we must accept the whole of the inspired autographs, or reject the whole as from end to end unauthoritative and worthless.'¹

Let me give two further illustrations of the undiscerning Bibliolatry of that orthodox period:

'The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the throne, absolute—faultless—unerring—supreme.'²

'Every word, every syllable, every letter (of the Bible) is just what it would be, had God spoken from heaven without any

¹ Quoted by Sir George William Cox, *The Life of Colenso*, vol. i, p. 230.

² Quoted *ibid.* vol. i, p. 229, from Dean Burgon, *Inspiration and Interpretation*.

human intervention. . . . Every scientific statement is infallibly accurate, all its history and narratives of every kind are without any inaccuracy. The words and phrases have a grammatical and philosophical accuracy, such as is possessed by no human composition.' ¹

These words meant, according to a responsible theologian who, as principal of a theological college, was training young minds for the ministry, that there were not—because there could not be—any blemishes in the text of either the Old Testament or the New.

To question in the least degree the absolute truth and the complete divine authority of the Bible was considered to be the vilest moral turpitude, as the following extract from a sermon of the famous Baptist preacher, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, indicated. 'Could ye roll all sins into one mass, could you take murder and blasphemy and lust, adultery, fornication, and everything that is vile, and unite them into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal even then the sin of unbelief. That is the monarch sin, the quintessence of guilt, the mixture of venom of all the crimes, the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah: it is the A1 sin, the master-piece of Satan, the chief work of the devil.'

The hostility of the clergy and the orthodox laity to the doctrine of evolution was passionate and almost universal. Mr. Gladstone, of whom Henry Fawcett said that 'he would go as far as he dared on the road to economic and fiscal reform, but only as far as he was forced on the road to religious freedom,' ² wrote sarcastically that 'upon the ground of what is called evolution, God is relieved of the labour of creation, and in the name of unchanging law, is discharged from the government of the world.' Almost instinctively and without either examination or understanding of Darwin's teaching, the clergy ranged themselves against the new explanation of the origin and development of man's life upon the earth, for, as Spencer pointed out in his essay, *The Development Hypothesis*, 'those who cavalierly reject the Theory of Evolution, as not adequately supported by facts, seem quite to forget that their own theory is supported by no facts at all. Like the majority of men who are born to a given belief, they demand the most rigorous proof of any adverse belief, but assume that their own needs none.' ³

Bishop Wilberforce, whose name has probably escaped oblivion

¹ Quoted *ibid.* vol. i, pp. 230-1, from Rev. Dr. Baylee, *Manual on Verbal Inspiration*.

² Mrs. Fawcett, *What I Remember*, p. 92.

³ Quoted by J. M. Robertson, *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 317.

because Huxley placed a lasting mark upon it, stated in the *Quarterly Review* that, 'the principle of Natural Selection is absolutely incompatible with the word of God.'¹ While Dean Farrar considered that the evolutionary doctrine was 'humiliating and wholly undemonstrable.'²

It was around the questions of evolution and Biblical historical criticism that the keenest controversial battles were fought. Protestant defenders of orthodox tradition short-sightedly elected to base their case upon the Bible as a Divine Revelation, and as the final guide in life and conduct. This ground of battle was not well chosen, for the Bible had the immense disadvantage that its documents could be subjected to precise and detailed examination and their authority tested, and when they were in fact so examined it was discovered that the claim of the Bible to represent exact historical and scientific truth could not be maintained. The panic-stricken clergy had to abandon one dogma after another, until in a wail of anguish the frightened believer began to ask whether there was in fact anything left for him to believe. There had been no garden of Eden. There never had existed the perfect man. The world had not been made in six days; the sun had not stood still on Gibeon; there had been no universal deluge.

It is probable that in the religious experience of mankind there has existed nothing quite like the smug assurance of British orthodoxy of fifty years ago; and to those who compare its aggressive teaching with modern religious conceptions, it will appear amazing that men of fine intellect and character could ever have regarded the accepted doctrines of the nineteenth century as the final expression of divine truth. To those of us who took a small part in the work of trying to popularize the newer religious conceptions, the cocksure defenders of ancient creeds appeared wilfully to have closed their minds to the daily revelation of new truths, and the temper of their denunciations of those who affirmed the nobility of modern interpretations seemed to be the very negation of that religion of love of which they were the feeble and uncharitable representatives. I saw a great deal of this controversy, and it is stating the bare fact when I say that, to the best of my belief, I never heard from them one word of generous appreciation either of the thought, the sincerity, or the character of those who sought to present the modernist case. The speakers employed by the Christian Evidence Society continuously attributed to secularist

¹ Quoted *ibid.* p. 318.

² Quoted *ibid.* p. 373.

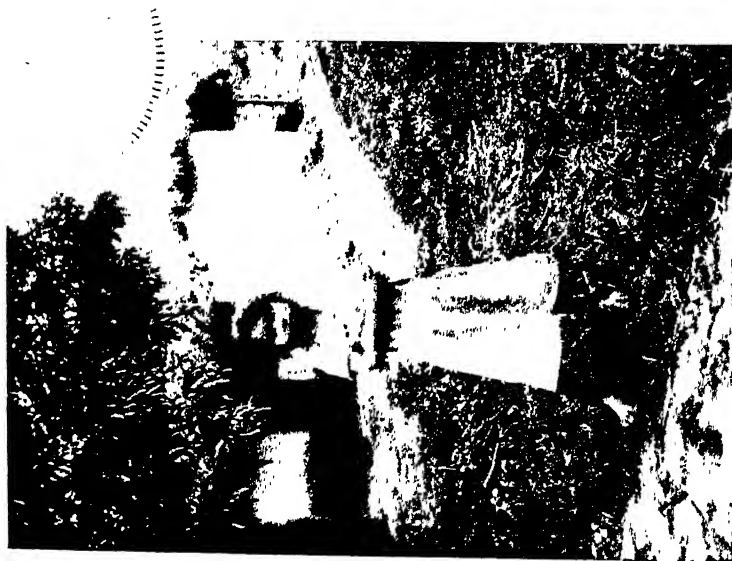
teachers every vice that men could possess, and at the time of Bradlaugh's death one of them, within my hearing, apparently thought that it would please God and assist Christian orthodoxy if he declared before a London audience that Bradlaugh 'had slunk into eternity without paying his debts.'

It would be easy to do the Church a serious injustice when describing the attitude adopted by her representatives towards the new religious ideas and the social aspirations of forty years ago, and I always tried to remember what her position was. The Christian churches existed in order to preach and defend certain inherited doctrines, and the clergy were therefore instinctively opposed to new ideas which appeared to undermine their authority. It has been one of the major misfortunes of religious history that the English churches have been so constantly occupied with questions of creed and ritual, that they have in great part left creative religious thought and interpretation to other institutions.

Take, for example, the remoteness, even to-day, of current British orthodoxy from the living needs of our time. Consider the British Empire, with its differing civilizations, its many religions and languages, its races in varying stages of social and spiritual development. What the British Commonwealth of Nations needs in order to unify its spirit, and to hold it firm in enthusiastic loyalty to a common purpose, is a religion, the main principles of which would appeal to all its separate parts—a religion which would interpret the idealism of the Britannic Alliance in such a way as to inspire and sustain the allegiance of all the peoples living under the British flag.

The actual position is grotesque, and possibly dangerous. The British Empire is a community of nations possessing widely divergent and mostly irreconcilable religious convictions. Only about eleven per cent of its population are even nominally Christians; yet the official religion of this mixed family of peoples, who should find inspiration and spiritual unity in a common faith which should bind together the Hindu, the Muhammadan, the Buddhist, and men of many other faiths, is presented in the Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church, concerning which Dr. W. R. Inge has said that, if they had to be interpreted in their plain English meaning, its clergy would have to be drawn from men who were either liars, bigots, or fools; and the Bishop of Durham has stated¹ that 'on purely democratic grounds the Church ought to be disestablished,

¹ *The Times*, 29th August 1932.



BRITISH GUIANA: IN A CORENTYNE COAST VILLAGE

since we now know that only a petty fraction of English citizens acknowledges its authority and conforms with its rules.'

There is not, in my opinion, the remotest chance that the peoples of the British Empire will accept as satisfactory the kind of religion that these Articles represent, and it is not an exaggeration to say that, in spite of the wealth and the unsparing devotion that have been given by noble men and women to missionary enterprises, the Muhammadan is no nearer to Christianity to-day than when the first missionary began his work. This to me at least is not to be wondered at, for there is no adequate reason why any man, who was born to and nurtured in a dignified religion of his own land, should desert it for the anachronisms of Canterbury or Rome. Yet in the name of our Thirty-nine Articles we still send missionaries to the 'heathen,' in the hope that the convinced and aggressive Muhammadan, the erudite Jew, the intelligent Buddhist, the meditative Hindu, will forsake their own faiths for one such as I have described, whereas all that we have the right to ask them to accept and serve is a religion the main principle of which is common to all men, the religion of the good life.

I must not close this chapter on a note of perhaps ungenerous criticism, of either the churches or their officials, although I still believe that if a doctor of men's bodies were to deal with his patients as the average parson deals with his congregation he would lose them. But I cannot leave the matter there. The average Christian preacher of the past fifty years has had to do his work under very difficult conditions. The old preaching Bibliolaters, who easily believed whatever was old, and hated, on principle, every new idea, could do their work without knowledge either of Biblical research or of their own limitations. But the modern pulpit teacher cannot do this. He knows that the doctrines taught with such assurance by his predecessors are 'one with Nineveh and Tyre,' and the many duties of his calling seriously encroach upon the leisure for reading and meditation, without which satisfactory preaching cannot be done.

In addition to the preparation and delivery of two or more sermons every week, the average parson may have to meet the heavy secular demands of a large parish, the activities of his church or chapel, and the needs of his Sunday school. He must also be at the disposal of a constant stream of callers, and he must show some interest in the civic affairs of the neighbourhood. St. Paul himself could not have performed all these duties with efficiency,

and there will be little improvement in the quality of Christian preaching, until the clergy revolt against the conditions under which they work, and in a new Declaration of Spiritual Independence demand the leisure necessary for the efficient performance of their proper business of teaching and edification.

These harassed clergy and ministers have my keen sympathy, because my own work as a teacher has had to be done under similar circumstances; but in one way or another I have tried to make myself acquainted with the subjects upon which I have been called upon to speak, and I have never made the mistake of regarding even the smallest of my engagements as unimportant. I have known many public men who apparently did not feel it necessary to prepare their speeches. They perhaps relied upon the principle of the advice given to the Apostles that 'it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak'; but the result was frequently very uninspiring.

I was privileged to associate myself with those who sought to break down some of the old doctrinal prejudices, and to take a humble part in the advocacy of larger conceptions of life and religion. The way in which we did our work may have been open to criticism from the standpoint of both knowledge and sympathy; but in spite of these possible defects, I am convinced that it was as necessary a prelude to a finer religious growth, as is the work of the ploughman who precedes the sower.

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA

He that plotted against another, if successful, was considered clever; he that suspected a plot still cleverer; but he that thought out measures of amelioration which should cut away the ground from both plots and counterplots, was thought to be a traitor.—THUCYDIDES.

IN estimating the meaning of the rise and growth of the Socialist movement in England it is necessary to remember that the driving force behind the attack on capitalism was not primarily political ambition nor economic distress, but moral indignation. Those who, like myself, were associated with its earliest phases, were not consciously moved by envy of the capitalist; they were the willing servants of a moral idealism, which aroused in them a devotion and a passion for service, such as had previously been associated only with purely religious movements. The compelling power of the Socialist appeal at that time was extraordinary; it held captive, and placed its yoke upon, young and old alike. I personally knew dozens of elderly men who counted the days of their conscious spiritual life from the hour that the ideal of an organized and morally sustained Co-operative Commonwealth entered into, and took possession of, their minds, and it was this creative enthusiasm which gave to the early Socialist movement and to the Labour Party, which was its child, a freshness and a driving power such as Liberalism did not possess, and Toryism could not buy. The young Socialist advocates were not political adventurers; they were preachers filled with the Holy Ghost. The fervour of their appeal was immediately arresting and highly infectious; its hopefulness passed from soul to soul, awakening, energizing, and transforming. Its zealots quarrelled among themselves concerning methods, they laughed merrily at their own follies, and stood united before the enemy. Without money, social prestige, or political experience, and opposed by the united power of the politicians and publicists of the land, they created by their enthusiasm and their faith an organized social force which, in less than two generations, broke the power of Liberalism, defeated Toryism at the polls, and became responsible for the government of the

most solidly-based capitalist country in the world. When this result was first achieved in 1924 I was almost overcome with emotion, and I felt that I could say to the 'good cause,' to the 'stern, remorseless, sweet idea': 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen salvation.'

It is almost impossible, in days in which men seem to have lost the power of enraged enthusiasm, to make even Socialist sympathizers realize the strength of the spiritual passion and the sustained rapture of those early years, or adequately to describe for them the almost fanatical fervour with which our attack was made; it was scorching and cleansing, a spiritual ecstasy the like of which I shall never again see. It was good then to be alive and to be able to work among those flaming wayward spirits; 'There were giants in those days.'

As illustrating the moral origins of the English Socialist movement, the Fabian Society, which claims to be the oldest of the definitely Socialist organizations ('the Social Democratic Federation did not adopt that name until August 1884; the Fabian Society can therefore claim technical priority'¹) was the spiritual offspring of the Fellowship of the New Life, founded by Thomas Davidson, which had for its basis the following:

OBJECT: 'The cultivation of a perfect moral character in each and all.'

PRINCIPLE: 'The subordination of material things to spiritual.'

Among the names associated with this creative movement were Percival Chubb, Edward R. Pease, H. Havelock Ellis, H. H. Champion, Frank Podmore, William Clarke, J. L. Joynes, and Hubert Bland. The Fabian Society was born out of the discussions of these men, and the English Socialist movement has retained throughout its history a touch of the moral glow associated with its birth. It is probable, indeed, that in England at least, no movement based on strictly material considerations could have aroused or sustained the crusading energy of the Socialist propaganda during the generation which ended with the outbreak of the Great War, and the voluntary devotion to 'the cause' which then existed has no parallel in any post-war movement. The disciples of the Socialist faith placed at its service all their spiritual powers, and they vied with each other in joyful subordination to its needs. During those strenuous and formative years the British Socialist movement was probably the most joyous and exacting political

¹ E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 61.

enterprise that ever existed. In none was the spirit of fellowship so marked and alluring. The inspiring words of William Morris were ever on our lips: 'Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death, and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship sake that ye do them.'¹

With these words and thoughts in our minds we fought with a kind of inspired rage 'the beneficent private war,' and all that it was and did. No quarter was asked for or given: we recklessly flung ourselves against the heavily fortified walls of capitalism and against all who defended them. Attempts to suppress our meetings were met and defeated. When we were not allowed to speak we 'preached.' Mr. James Sexton, now Sir James Sexton, more than once, when forbidden by the local police to speak at a chosen pitch, hied him to a place allotted to outdoor religious services, and 'preached' a Socialist sermon, taking for his text the first verse of the third chapter of the book of Nahum: 'Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery.' Thus, we proclaimed our 'good tidings' wherever an audience could be obtained, and we exerted an influence altogether beyond our numbers.

Some of my own experiences as a propagandist were highly amusing, and they were sometimes disconcerting. One Sunday morning I was speaking at an open-air meeting in the New Cut, Lambeth, where my platform was wedged in between a noisy auctioneer of old clothes and a vendor of sarsaparilla. My theme was that of the Greek city beautiful as contrasted with Lambeth. There was no end of moral uplift in it, and all went well until two men appeared in the neighbourhood with several terriers and a cage full of live rats. In less time than it takes to relate the story Athens and Pericles were abandoned, and my audience to the last man, including the chairman of the meeting, deserted me and gave whole-hearted attention to the killing of the rats. I managed, however, to console myself with the thought that Demosthenes himself could not have prevailed against that counter-attraction, at least not in Lambeth. But they were great times. We fought for what to us were high ideals: we were often defeated and disappointed, but never depressed, for we were no surer of sunset than that our cause would triumph. We achieved our end because we believed that we could do so. We never submitted to defeat.

¹ *A Dream of John Ball*, chapter iv.

Like the hero in the Border ballad, 'when our legs were beaten under us we fought upon their stumps.'

But the Socialist movement did not sweep through the land in a day or a year, and it is not easy to summarize the various phases of its growth. I was privileged to stand beside the cradle of the new cause almost as soon as it was born, and the popular journalistic belief that it was derived from one source alone—the brain of Karl Marx—is based on what is, at most, only a half-truth.

There were other contributing influences, the most powerful being Henry George's book, *Progress and Poverty*, which had been published in America in 1879. This unexpected, almost inspired, assault on the old order created an enormous impression, and it helped to give to the current Socialist propaganda a much needed basis of reality. The earlier Socialists, such as Owen, had favoured the idea of Utopian communities, the co-operators of the period insisted that voluntary associations of producers and consumers were the sure agents of better days, while a small number of feather-headed Socialists were out-and-out revolutionaries. Henry George suggested a novel method by which wealth could be distributed more equitably, and be made to serve public rather than private ends. He showed that it was not necessary to have a violent revolution in order to destroy the power of the landlord; he could be deprived of his ill-gotten gains by the comparatively painless method of taxation. The propaganda which followed the publication of the book had an instant success; that it alarmed the landlord class was evident to the blindest politician in the land; and that the fear which was then aroused has not since been dispelled is shown by their alert hostility to every proposal designed to make the land bear a more equitable share of the public burden of taxation.

I have already explained why this doctrine of the single tax, which attracted me both by its novelty and its promise, did not retain its early grip on my imagination. Its central proposition was that the land alone should bear the burden of taxation, allowing other monopolies to go scot-free, and it therefore touched only a small portion of the taxable wealth of the community. The book had, however, an immediate and powerful influence on the minds of Socialist thinkers, and 'from Henry George I think it may be taken that the early Fabians learned to associate the new gospel with the old political method.'¹

Changes were also taking place in regard to economic theory. As early as 1861 the president of the Economic Section of the British Association had declared that the results of the Ten Hours Act of 1847 were 'something of which all parties might well be proud,' and between these dates Roebuck, Cobden, and others had been converted to the new industrial policy. *The Times* in 1874 had given a half-frightened approval, by declaring that 'the ultimate end of factory legislation is to prescribe certain conditions of existence below which the population shall not decline,' while John Morley had come to believe that 'unfettered competition is not a principle to which the regulation of industry may be safely entrusted.'¹ Unregulated competition was in any case a doomed theory, for it had been refuted by practical experience. There had been a succession of industrial and social measures which put limits to its operation, and standards of living had been affirmed in measures dealing with health, leisure, education, provision against sickness and accidents.

Owing to the rapidly changing attitude of the economists on industrial matters it became profitable for those who were Socialist advocates to search the pages of the modern school of economic writers for support for our theories. The authority of John Stuart Mill was at that time almost decisive, and as he grew older he became increasingly favourable to the Socialist outlook. 'If the choice were to be made between Communism [Socialism] with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices, if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it almost in inverse proportion to labour, the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessities of life; if this or Communism were the alternative, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism would be as dust in the balance.'²

Other economic writers also amply repaid our scrutiny of their works. Professor H. S. Foxwell in an essay on *The Claims of*

¹ Quoted by Philip Snowden, *The Living Wage*, p. 13.

² *Political Economy* (2nd edition, 1852), Bk. II, chap. 1, sec. 3: quoted by Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 22.

Labour (p. 249) stated that 'we have been suffering for a century from an acute outbreak of individualism, unchecked by the old restraints, and invested with almost a religious sanction by a certain soulless school of writers,' and Mr. J. K. Ingram declared that 'the mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well-ordered commonwealth of labour,'¹ while Professor J. E. Cairnes had encouraged a revolt against capitalist domination by stating that 'if workmen do not rise from dependence upon capital by the path of co-operation, then they must remain in dependence upon capital; the margin for the possible improvement of their lot is confined within narrow barriers which cannot be passed, and the problem of their elevation is hopeless. As a body they will not rise at all. A few, more energetic or more fortunate than the rest, will from time to time escape, as they do now, from the ranks of their fellows to the higher walks of industrial life, but the great majority will remain substantially where they are. The remuneration of labour, as such, skilled or unskilled, can never rise much above its present level.'²

I have quoted these economic authorities in order to show that, although our revolt against the prevailing capitalist system was mainly moral in its origins, it was not altogether detached from reality. I, among many others, deliberately set myself to study economic science, because I believed that a close acquaintance with its teachings would be a powerful weapon in our hands. And so indeed it was.

It is not easy to name any date or place as being the beginning of the revolt, nor can it be put to the credit of any one man. Many influences co-operated to begin it, but no account of its origin could omit the influence on the minds of its founders, of the great personality of Karl Marx. Exiled from Prussia in 1849, this greatest of refugees came to England, where he lived in poverty for the rest of his life, and it was in London that his great work, *Das Kapital*, was written. He helped to found in 1864 the International Working Men's Association, and he became 'in fact, though not in name, the head of its general council.'³ Marx was typically German in character, mind, and style, and for many years his books were unknown in the country in which they had been written, although Mr. Hyndman's *England for All*, published in

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

² *Leading Principles of Political Economy*, p. 348.

³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

1881, dealt with his ideas without mentioning his name. His influence on world affairs was perhaps destined to be more profound and lasting than that of any other political personality throughout the nineteenth century, but when he died on the 14th March 1883 England, with traditional blindness, knew only that a rather grubby refugee 'foreigner' had passed away. I much regret that I never had the privilege of meeting him.

In due time other influences, purely English in character, began to manifest themselves. Among the earliest of these was the founding of the Fabian Society, which was destined to influence, to a remarkable degree, the political thought of England during the next generation. As I have already stated, the society arose out of the activities of the Fellowship of the New Life in December 1883, although the word 'Socialism' did not appear on its papers until March in the following year. 'In January 1884 "*Justice*, the organ of the Democratic Federation," was founded, and in August of that year the Federation made the first of its many changes of name, and became the Social Democratic Federation, or S.D.F.,¹ and from that time onward it conducted a vigorous and sustained attack upon the principles of British capitalism.

Another influence of a temporarily effective character was the Industrial Remuneration Conference, which met at the old Princes Hall in London on 28th January 1885, and which had been made possible by a donation of £1,000 from a Mr. Miller of Edinburgh. The conference devoted three days to a discussion of the question: 'Has the increase of products of industry within the last hundred years tended most to the benefit of capitalists and employers, or to that of the working classes, whether artisans, labourers, or others? And in what relative proportions in any given period?'

In addition to many useful contributions to the thought of the conference, there was a lively speech by Mr. George Bernard Shaw, 'probably the first he delivered before an audience of more than local importance.' In the course of his remarks he said that 'it was the desire of the president that nothing should be said that might give pain to particular classes. He was about to refer to a modern class, the burglars, but if there was a burglar present he begged him to believe that he cast no reflection upon his profession, and that he was not unmindful of his great skill and enterprise: his risks—so much greater than those of the most speculative capitalist, extending as they did to risk of liberty and life—his

¹ E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 49.

abstinence; or finally of the great number of people to whom he gave employment, including criminal attorneys, policemen, turn-keys, builders of gaols, and it might be the hangman. He did not wish to hurt the feelings of shareholders . . . or of landlords . . . any more than he wished to pain burglars. He would merely point out that all three inflicted on the community an injury of precisely the same nature.’¹

The beginning of the revolt against the working conditions of the last century, so far as the English workers were concerned, was the Trafalgar Square disturbances of Sunday, the 13th November 1887, which resulted in the arrest and the trial at the Old Bailey, on the 18th January 1888, of Mr. John Burns and Mr. Cunningham Graham, on the charge of Riot and Unlawful Assembly. Mr. Graham was defended by Mr. Asquith, who was then practising at the bar. Mr. Burns delivered from the dock an impassioned and defiant speech in defence of his own action. He declared that only Socialism would ensure that ‘labour shall be a noble, elevating duty, not an unhealthy, slavish drudgery.’ The defendants were found guilty of the charge against them, and the sentence of six weeks’ imprisonment which was passed upon them aroused popular feeling to a degree which was quite unexpected.

Arising from these sentences, and the attack upon the right of public meeting which was being made elsewhere, a small weekly journal, the *Link*, was published, under the editorship of Mrs. Besant, and in July 1888 the girls employed at a match factory in the East End of London came out on strike. These courageous girls had neither funds, organization, nor leaders, and they appealed to Mrs. Besant to advise and lead them. It was a wise and most excellent inspiration. Mrs. Besant immediately placed herself at their disposal, and with the help of Mr. Herbert Burrows, she quickly, and to a quite extraordinary degree, aroused public sympathy in favour of the stand the girls were making. Money was quickly subscribed for their support and, within a fortnight, the employers considered it prudent to concede their demands. The number affected was quite small, but the ‘match girls’ strike’ had an influence upon the minds of the workers which entitles it to be regarded as one of the most important events in the history of labour organization in any country. It showed the workers in other ill-paid industries, what organization backed by competent leadership and spirited action could accomplish,

¹ Quoted *ibid.* p. 46.

and it was the beginning of the modern phase of the Labour movement.

The next year, in 1889, Mr. Will Thorne, himself a gasworker, a capable organizer, and a much respected working-class leader, formed the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union, which began its career by securing from the gas companies, to its own and the public surprise, the unexpected concession of the eight-hour day.

A further important result of the 'match girls' strike' was the attempt to organize the grossly underpaid labourers employed at the London docks. Socialist advocates addressed early morning meetings at the dock gates, in order to reach the crowds of casual workers as they went to make their daily and frequently hopeless request for work. 'An insignificant dispute on the 12th August 1889 as to the amount of "plus" (or bonus earned over and above the fivepence per hour) on a certain cargo, brought on an impulsive strike of the labourers at the South-West India Dock. The men demanded sixpence an hour, the abolition of sub-contract and piecework, extra pay for overtime, and a minimum engagement of four hours. Mr. Ben Tillett (who was trying to establish the Tea Workers and General Labourers' Union) called to his aid his friends, Tom Mann and John Burns,' and 'the strike spread rapidly to all the docks north of the Thames. . . . Under the magnetic influence and superb generalship of Mr. John Burns, which have made him famous as a labour leader on both sides of the globe, the traffic of the world's greatest port was, for over ten weeks, completely paralysed. . . . A public subscription of £48,736 allowed Mr. John Burns to organize an elaborate system of strike pay . . . and, finally, the concentrated pressure of editors, clergymen, shareholders, shipowners, and merchants enabled Cardinal Manning and Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., as self-appointed mediators, to compel the dock directors to concede practically the whole of the men's demands. . . . As in the case of the match girls in the previous year, the most remarkable feature of the dockers' strike was the almost universal sympathy with the workers' demands.' The result of the strike stimulated trade unionism in all directions, and 'within a year after the dockers' victory, probably over 200,000 workers had been added to the trade union ranks recruited from sections of the labour world formerly abandoned as incapable of organization.'¹

¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 388-92.

These stirring events aroused the interest of the low-paid and unorganized workers throughout the land, and at every meeting that we addressed we urged upon them the method of organization and rebellion if they too would enjoy the reward of 'the full round orb of the dockers' tanner.' The infection quickly spread from London to the provinces, and in the Midlands, where I was then stationed, we aroused, by constant and impassioned propaganda, the necessary interest in, and enthusiasm for, better conditions for every section of the worst paid workers. Our enthusiasm was intense, and our faith in Socialism was untouched by knowledge of the administrative and other difficulties in the path of its speedy realization. Sufficient unto the day was the faith and our devotion to it. The campaign was more like a religious revival than a political agitation, and the singing of labour hymns at every meeting contributed to the feeling that we were the pioneers of a new faith. Edward Carpenter's *England Arise*, and later *The Red Flag* (a dreadful dirge), were general favourites, and we sung with defiant enthusiasm the 'Sound and Rumour' song of William Morris.

O ye rich men, hear and tremble! for with words the sound is rife:
 'Once for you and death we laboured; changed henceforward is the strife.
 We are men, and we shall battle for the world of men and life;
 And our host is marching on.'

Our immediate task, as we conceived it, was to destroy in the minds of the workers their belief in the inevitability of poverty, a doctrine which had with calculating shrewdness been consistently proclaimed by politicians and by the less-informed among the clergy. We insisted that so long as the sweated worker could be made to believe that it was God and not the capitalist that was responsible for his poverty, there could be no substantial improvement in his condition, and we let loose upon him the inspiring slogan of the famous Communist Manifesto, that while he had a whole world to win, he had nothing to lose but his chains.

These years of hard study and hectic propaganda involved for me constant labour and a complete absence of any form of recreation, other than an occasional visit to the theatre, and the days and weeks were almost alike in their incidents and demands. Meetings had to be addressed, propaganda plans prepared, and committees without limit attended. It was an inspiring but exhausting business. I served under many leaders, and I do not know any cause that had greater reason for pride in the character and quality of

those who led and served the Labour movement in its earlier years. The older type of trade-union leader, such as Thomas Burt and Henry Broadhurst, had set a standard in personal conduct and sturdy sanity of judgment which was always equalled, if not surpassed, by men of the newer school, such as Burns, Hardie, Henderson, and many whose names I need not mention. Every political student will find in the public work of these men much that he dislikes, but when the test is that of personal character, loyalty to conviction, and level-headed practice, they have the whole-hearted admiration and gratitude of their class.

The leader about whom I knew the least was Henry Mayers Hyndman, who was one of the ablest and most unapproachable figures in the Socialist movement. He was a man of striking appearance, with a fine head and a long flowing beard, and his influence with the extremists owed much to his frequent and calculated avowals that he belonged to the rich and robber class. As a controversialist he was dogmatic and unreliable, and as a leader petulant and domineering. In the year 1880 he had read a French edition of Karl Marx's work, *Das Kapital*, which so impressed him that in 1881 he organized a conference at the Westminster Town Hall, at which the Democratic Federation, afterwards the S.D.F., was established. Its first programme contained little which could not have been found in the demands of the advanced Radical groups of the period, but, three years later, the title of the organization was altered, and the S.D.F. emerged with a definite Socialist programme and policy. The London Radical clubs were immediately and completely horrified by its open attack on the Liberal party, and they replied with injured passion, and with an offended excommunication of the rebels. The S.D.F. never became a powerful political organization, and only once, so far as I remember, did it organize and lead a popular movement. Its happiest moments were when it criticized other Socialist groups for their non-revolutionary propaganda; but its denunciation of the Fabians as 'arm-chair Socialists' was always associated with urgent appeals to them to render service on its platforms.

The first direct challenge to the established order made by the S.D.F. was in 1886, when unemployment was unusually severe, and when much suffering and discontent prevailed. Demonstrations were organized in Trafalgar Square, and following one of these, as the procession of depressed and hungry men was on its way to Hyde Park, malicious jeers from the windows of Pall Mall

caused the marchers to break a few windows, and drive in frightened panic those who had mocked them, to the protective cellars of their clubs. Some of the shops in the neighbourhood were looted, and outraged West End plutocrats, consistently hostile to State action except when it served their own ends, immediately demanded protection against the menace of the hungry barbarians at the gate. This timid outburst of lawlessness caused an immediate sensation, and fear of extended riot, if not actual revolution, disturbed the habitual complacency of high society. Something had to be done, and that quickly. A Mansion House Fund had already been started with poor results, but within fourteen days after these events, the sum contributed rose from £3,000 to £60,000. Following this outbreak of insubordination, meetings in Trafalgar Square were, for a time, forbidden, but I took part in at least one of several Saturday afternoon parades, which were addressed by a speaker as he walked backwards round the square, guided by colleagues at his side, while his audience followed behind.

In our innocence we believed that these futile and angry demonstrations were the birth pangs of a new order; that England was indeed rising, and that 'the day was here.' Hyndman, who characteristically had allotted to himself the role of chief revolutionist, was reputed to have carried with him, in case of instant need, the names of the first British Socialist Cabinet! How little of human nature he, and we, then knew!

The most famous and picturesque of the Socialist agitators of this period was William Morris, who thought himself 'a dreamer, born out of my due time.' He was a capable business man, and he asked prices for his products which put them beyond the reach of any but the rich. 'There are no greater fools,' he used to say, 'than the rich who buy my wall-papers—except those who don't.' That Morris was a great poet is, I think, established. Swinburne placed him in the line of Homer. His place as an artist and craftsman is also assured. As an employer he sought to reduce to practice the industrial idealism that had been preached by Ruskin. In his workshops no servile eyes looked down at the loom when the master passed. He encouraged his employees to regard themselves as fellow-craftsmen, and 'it was his noble ambition to make the life of each of his workers a poem and a song of praise. It was his glory to have succeeded in it. There has been none quite like it in our industrial annals.'¹ Morris realized, however,

¹ *Daily News*, quoted by H. D. Lloyd, *Mazzini and other Essays*, p. 53.

that the conditions he sought to establish in his own workshops were but an expression of his own personality, and that they in no way solved the general problem of industrial capitalism. He knew that art and beauty were impossible under the economic conditions of his time, but he tried to do in his own workshops what he wanted the State to do for the nation—abolish sweating, remove ugliness and disorder, and create a conscious passion for both domestic and communal beauty.

I knew Morris only as a humble and admiring devotee may know the master. I listened to him with something like awe. In my mind his gifts and experience placed him among the supermen. But his kinship with the rest of us was proved in many ways. He possessed a quick and inflammable temper, and it was a joy to see and hear him, when angry and impromptu words were being passed between himself and the universe. He could laugh like a sailor, and swear with a rare and sustained fluency. I might have known him better if I had been less aware of his greatness.

Morris joined the Socialist army as a soldier in the ranks. He insisted upon doing his share of the common tasks. A leader in the world of art and letters, a friend and colleague of Burne-Jones and the leading literary and artistic men of his day, he took his place among the humblest of his fellow Socialists, and stood his corner, on equal terms, in all our tasks of organization and propaganda. He regularly sold our weekly penny journal in the streets of London, and joyfully mounted a soap-box whenever a meeting could be organized. I attended and spoke at many of these open-air meetings, and I always admired the breezy unconventionality of his speeches. He never pretended to belong to the working classes, and in his addresses he always spoke of 'we capitalists.' His enthusiasm was as catching as a fever, but he later came to realize that the faith and courage of his 'comrades' were not equal to his own. They applauded his speeches, they were encouraged by the prestige of his name, and they vigorously sang what he had written.

'On we march then, we the workers, and the rumour that ye hear,
Is the blended sound of battle and deliv'rance drawing near;
For the hope of every creature is the banner that we bear,
And the world is marching on.'

But when the hour of test came their courage failed them, and he was driven to recognize that the revolutionary fervour of the platform was not the same thing as heroism at the barricades; and that

the anti-Fabian, left-wing, irreconcilable social democrats, who cheered every suggestion of revolutionary violence, ran like frightened hens whenever a few policemen appeared upon the scene. In the year 1887, as Mr. Bernard Shaw relates, Morris saw the 'marching host' 'fly in a ludicrous rout before the onslaught of a dozen white-faced scared policemen. Before the start from Clerkenwell Green he addressed the crowd, and exhorted them to march together steadily and quietly, and not to let themselves be turned from their purpose.' And when he saw them scatter before vastly inferior forces, he lost faith in their loyalty and courage, and from that day of disillusionment he began to make a slow heart-broken retreat. He felt and said that he had failed; that he was indeed 'the idle singer of an empty day.'

In this matter at least his judgment was at fault. Keats thought that he also had written his name in water, and he too had been wrong. Morris inspired other men to carry on his work with other methods, and in his gloom he forgot to sustain himself with his own advice: 'Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for, comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes, turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.'

The fiercest frontal attack on capitalism was made by the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League. In addition to Hyndman, the burden of the propaganda was borne by John Burns, Herbert Burrows, John Hunter Watts, Henry Lee, Harry Quelch, Belfort Bax, Andreas Scheu, Walter Crane, and dozens of valiant working-class speakers, among whom I was privileged to work. Our platform propaganda was later supplemented by the journalistic power of Mr. Robert Blatchford ('Nunquam') and Mr. A. M. Thompson ('Dangle') in the *Sunday Chronicle* and, later still, with a sparkling team of writers in the *Clarion*, which they owned and edited. Some of Mr. Blatchford's articles were reprinted in book form at a ridiculously cheap price under the title of *Merrie England*, of which hundreds of thousands of copies were sold.

The women propagandists were also an exceptionally gifted team. The oratorical power and general capacity of Mrs. Besant was not equalled among women either in England or in any other country, and had her service in the working-class movement been continued, she might have carried it to levels as yet unreachd; but at an early stage of its development she decided to give to theosophy

powers that belonged to mankind, and the people's cause lost, in consequence, the help of her matchless eloquence. Mrs. Sidney Webb too was a tower of knowledgeable strength, and her home at 41 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, became for a generation and a half the chief intellectual centre of the movement. Among the most effective of the women propagandists were Miss Enid Stacy, who later married the Rev. Percy Widdrington, and Miss Caroline Martyn, who died while young in years and with much promise unfulfilled. There were also Miss Katharine Conway, who became the wife of Mr. Bruce Glasier, and Miss Ethel Annakin, who is now the Viscountess Snowden.

Of a different type, but of great capacity, was Eleanor Marx Aveling, whose prestige as a daughter of Karl Marx was to the S.D.F. particularly, and to the Socialist propaganda generally, a valuable asset. She was a woman of heavy build, very dark, widely read and widely travelled, and it was a privilege to talk with her about her distinguished father and his famous friends, Engels, Bebel, and others. Of her husband, Dr. Edward Aveling, little need be said. He was a man of great capacity, a magnificent speaker with a wonderful voice, but his sense of responsibility towards others, or to whatever cause he elected to serve, was quite undeveloped. It was through my acquaintance with Dr. Aveling that I first realized that a fine education and a powerful mind did not of necessity make a fine man. He had a head full of the best brains that a man could desire; he had powers that were almost unequalled in his generation, and if his sense of moral responsibility had been even normal in its development, he might have been a great leader in the Socialist movement. Both he and his wife died by their own hands.

We were occasionally encouraged in our work by the visits of distinguished 'comrades' from other lands, and among those whom I met during this period were Émile Vandervelde of Belgium, then a young man, whose lucid and powerful French speeches were much admired; Dr. César de Pape; and, more picturesque than all the rest, Louise Michel, 'la Vierge Rouge.' This fiery spirit had acquired an international reputation as a fierce and courageous fighter in the ill-fated Paris Commune of 1871, and so long as her physical strength lasted she was a personality whom the defenders of the old order could not ignore. When I got to know her she was already a feeble old lady, but as soon as she began to address an audience hidden strength seemed to come to her aid, her eyes

lighted up with an almost youthful enthusiasm, and destructive words were shot from her mouth like molten lava from a volcano. I had the privilege of presiding over, and speaking at, some of the meetings she addressed, and I always revered her for the consistency and the rare courage which she gave to her work.

We also had visits from some of the best known among the Russian revolutionists of the period, notably Maria Breshkovskaya, the 'grandmother of the Russian Revolution,' while Prince Kropotkin, Sergius Stepniak, Volkhovsky, and others who resided in London, frequently attended our meetings. Kropotkin was the acknowledged leader of the Communist-anarchists of the period. He was a man of great learning and of singular sweetness of character. His books and pamphlets were widely read, and his passionate *Appeal to the Young* was one of the most effective propaganda pamphlets ever issued. It was translated into many languages, and it won ardent disciples among the youth of all nations. The books from his pen which had the greatest influence in England were *Factories, Fields, and Workshops*, and *Mutual Aid*, the former showing the possibilities of increased food production by a more intensive system of cultivation, while the latter attempted to refute the anti-social views of the pseudo-Darwinians which were based upon the alleged untamable law of the survival of the fittest. His volume on the French Revolution greatly interested me, and on more than one occasion he tried to persuade me to undertake an intensive study of the condition of the working classes in England during the seventeenth century, with a view to my writing a companion volume on the English Revolution of 1688, but I could not give the time necessary for the fulfilment of the task.

The place of the Independent Labour Party in the work of this period will be dealt with in connection with the rise of the modern Labour Party, but I note here that it became one of the most powerful political organizations of the time. The effect and extent of the propaganda which it conducted was probably unexampled in the history of our country, and its influence upon English political life during the last forty years has been profound. A great deal of my own propaganda work was done under its auspices and in connection with the Fabian Society, to which I was specially attached.

The fullest demand upon the strength of their speakers was continuously made by these propagandist bodies, and for many years I never had a pause for rest, recreation, or quiet meditation.

Calls for the service of capable advocates were constant and insistent. Audiences at Conservative meetings were encouraged to believe that the life of the Socialist 'agitator' was one of mischievous indolence and easily-won rewards; but my own experience as a propagandist was one of exacting toil and small remuneration. The workers are, indeed, among the hardest of taskmasters, and the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire was rarely honoured when the labourer was one whom they employed. I have on scores of occasions left London on a Saturday afternoon to fulfil a Sunday lecturing engagement in the Midlands or the North of England, to find on arriving at my destination that the 'comrades' had, in addition, arranged for a meeting at a neighbouring town or village on the Saturday evening, and added at least one, and sometimes two, meetings in addition to those arranged for the Sunday, at each of which there would be questions and discussion following the main address. Then, there would be the fatigue of an all-night return journey to London in order to be available for work at the usual hour on Monday morning. The nervous strain of this kind of work is realized only by those who undertake it, while the 'rewards' were usually the exact railway fare from the London terminus; the expenses incurred between Woolwich and St. Pancras, and anything spent on the journey, being left to me to pay, with the result that on many occasions I returned home completely exhausted and out of pocket to the extent of from seven to ten shillings. It was for the 'cause.' 'In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.'¹

The time came when, for reasons of health, it was advisable to leave journeys of this kind to those who were stronger and who had the courage to insist upon being paid for their work, but I give my own experience to show how false and malicious are the usual charges of indolence and parasitic gain which are made against Socialist speakers. The life of the travelling propagandist is one of continuous uncertainty and hardship, and few would follow such a career for its material rewards. If he is a married man he is rarely at home, and if single, he should think twice before he takes upon himself the responsibilities of married life. It is indeed doubtful whether a wandering preacher should ever marry. He is generally compelled to neglect his home and sometimes the results are serious. I have known many cases where such marriages have resulted in unhappiness to both husband and wife. On the

¹ Proverbs xiv 23.

other hand, the bachelor often purchases his freedom at too high a price. When he is well and can work both day and night he has little time to lament that he is not as other men, but when fatigue or ill-health overtakes him he may have moments when he wonders whether the 'cause' is worth the sacrifice.

The celibate pioneer agitator is able to urge the sufficient excuse that as a suitor in marriage he was at a great disadvantage as compared with the conventional young man of the period, and doting parents generally advised their daughters to avoid so precarious an alliance. 'Be careful,' they said, 'and let who will be impetuous; do not let your affections jeopardize your prospects of comfort; watch your step; you may perhaps marry by mistake, but you will never be set free by mistake.' The philosophy of Tennyson's Northern Farmer was handed on to their children by these spent and calculating counsellors, who had forgotten the generous impulses of their own youth:

I know'd a Quaaker feller as often 'as tow'd ma this:
 'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is!'
 An' I went wheer munny war; and thy muther coom to 'and,
 Wi' lots o' munny läid by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.

The end sought by the parents of the upper and middle classes was the same, the marriage settlement being considered quite as important as the marriage lines. The degree of encouragement given to a young suitor in marriage by the parents of the time depended upon their estimate of his worldly prospects. Like tends to produce like, and the young women, for the most part, resembled their parents. Such calculating prudence may not be so universal in the twentieth as in the nineteenth century, although I believe that it is still true that if you drive a car your girl rides with you; but if you walk, you walk alone. But I have never regretted that I remained single; I am, on the contrary, grateful to more than one girl who might have married me, but did not.

Sweet was her smile—but not for me;
 Alas, when woman looks *too* kind,
 Just turn your foolish head and see,
 Some richer youth is close behind!¹

No account of the rise and growth of the modern Socialist and Labour movements would be complete or accurate which ignored the services of a small but able and very courageous group of clergy

¹ O. W. Holmes, *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* (adapted).

and ministers of the Christian churches. These far-seeing men were always gladly received in the movement, but they risked much when they joined it. To ally themselves with Socialism required courage and a faith strong enough to face the active persecution which participation in its work then frequently involved. The clergymen of the Church of England were in a position of independence compared with that of nonconformist ministers, whose livelihood might depend upon the approval of a few perhaps intolerant and uninformed chapel notables. It was natural therefore that in these circumstances, we received more open support from clergymen than from ministers of the dissenting communions.

The Church had, indeed, a great and respected tradition in this matter, although neither Frederick Denison Maurice nor Charles Kingsley was a Socialist in the sense in which Socialism is now understood, and it is doubtful whether they were even social democrats; but they were beyond all question prophets, if the modern Church has ever produced such. They saw clearly the evils that the competitive system of industry had produced; they smote it where it stood, and they did not hesitate to say 'Thou art the man' to whoever was individually responsible for the anti-social acts they condemned.

As the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam pointed out, 'we who are Socialists owe a special debt of gratitude to the men who gathered round Maurice in 1848, and under his influence and teaching made by their work and writings the propagation of Socialism a far easier thing than it otherwise would have been.'¹ The bravery shown by men like Maurice and Kingsley in adopting 'Socialism,' and in declaring it to be 'Christian,' was at a time when to most people it meant both atheism and loose morals. To Maurice it meant co-operation as opposed to competition, and he declared that 'any one who recognizes the true principle of co-operation as a stronger and higher principle than that of competition has a right to the honour and disgrace of being called a Socialist.'²

Kingsley was satisfied to be the interpreter of Maurice, but he was not afraid to admit that the Church had been false and timid in its approach to the social problems of the day. 'We have used the Bible as if it were the special constable's handbook—an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they were being

¹ Quoted by Adderley, *The Parson in Socialism*, p. 159.

² Quoted *ibid.* p. 160.

overworked—a mere book to keep the poor in order. We have told you that the powers that be are ordained of God, without telling you who ordained the impotencies and imbecilities that be, alas, sometimes. We have told you that the Bible preaches the rights of property, and the duties of labour when (God knows) for once that it does that, it preaches ten times over the duties of property and the rights of labour.’ One of the lay disciples of these two modern social prophets, J. M. Ludlow, took the initiative in founding a society with Maurice as its president for the purpose of promoting co-operation and education among the working classes, and the Working Men’s College was created. ‘I certainly thought,’ said Tom Hughes, ‘(and for that matter have never altered my opinion to this day) that we had found the solution to the great labour question; but I was also convinced that we had nothing to do but just to announce it, and found an association or two in order to convert all England, and usher in the millennium at once, so plain did the whole thing seem to me.’¹

Following Maurice and his disciples an increasing number of the clergy began to study the social problem. They attempted to alter the outlook of the Church in regard to it, and they sought to break down the hostility of the working classes towards the Church and its teaching. Increasing numbers of them began to realize that what Arnold Toynbee described as ‘a population huddled together in towns in filthy dens like wild animals, women working like beasts in mines, countrymen famished in dark hovels, tumult and anger among the people’ was not a soil in which either religion or manhood could flourish, and men like Edward Denison and others went to live in the East End of London, in the vain endeavour to make peace between the Church and the people. School and college missions were organized, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* was written, and Canon Samuel Barnett formed the Toynbee Hall social settlement. In 1876 the Rev. Stewart Headlam formed the Guild of St. Matthew through which he, Canon Henry Cary Shuttleworth, and a group of Church of England priests and laymen set themselves ‘to justify God to the people.’ This organization was openly Socialist in the economic as well as in the ethical sense of the word. ‘We are Socialists because we are sacramentalists,’ they said, and their outspoken vigour prompted the ecclesiastical authorities to endeavour to divert attention from

¹ Quoted by Rae, *Contemporary Socialism* (4th edition, 1908), p. 222.

them by founding an organization with vaguer principles and more docile manners.

The Christian Social Union was started in 1889, with this end in view. When, in 1887, Mr. H. H. Champion addressed the Church Congress, and referred to Queen Victoria as a 'woman,' all the maiden aunts of the Church felt that something had to be done. And whatever it was, the Christian Social Union set itself to do it. Bishop Westcott became its first president, and through him, and those clergymen whose names I have mentioned, English Christians began to see the difference between creed and character. 'The Christian law is not precept,' said Bishop Westcott, 'but the embodiment of Truth for action in forms answering to the condition of society from age to age.' 'Socialism,' he declared, 'is co-operation, the method of Individualism is competition. The one regards man as working with man for a common end, the other regards man as working against man for private gain. The aim of Socialism is the fulfilment of service, the aim of Individualism is the attainment of some personal advantage, riches, or place of fame. Socialism seeks such an organization of life as shall secure for every one the most complete development of his power. Individualism seeks primarily the satisfaction of the particular wants of each one in the hope that the pursuit of private interests will in the end secure public welfare.'¹ The best known of Bishop Westcott's disciples were Bishop Charles Gore and Canon Scott Holland, to both of whom, as to Bishop Westcott himself, the Socialist cause is lastingly indebted.

I was not, of course, a member of either the Guild of St. Matthew or the Christian Social Union, but I had the privilege of knowing many of their most distinguished workers. I knew the Rev. Stewart Headlam throughout almost the whole of my adult life, from the time when in the eighties of the last century he spoke in Nottingham under the auspices of the Secular Society, to the day of his death when we were colleagues on the London County Council. Headlam was always emphatic in his belief that the Christian Church provided the quickest and easiest way of achieving Socialism. 'The Church is itself the great engine of reform by which Socialists can accomplish their aims; the Socialists have rights in the Church itself; let them claim their rights: the Church is misunderstood; she has been judged by the action of particular

¹ Quoted by Adderley, *The Parson in Socialism*, p. 182, from *The Incarnation and Common Life*.

members; she has only got to be true to herself and she can act with the Socialists, and they with her for a common object.’¹ I had the greatest personal regard for Headlam, and I admired his unwavering courage, his broad-mindedness, and his complete loyalty to the principles that governed his life. I never knew his sense of tolerance to fail. He was an ardent supporter of the policy of secular education; he advocated the unconditional repeal of the antiquated blasphemy laws, and he was, without the least sacrifice of his own view of their opinions, the trusted friend of Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and most of the leading secularists of his day. It is impossible to name all those belonging to the various churches who, as the message of the Socialist movement reached them, began to love and serve it. I knew many of them; they were capable and loyal both as friends and colleagues, and they enriched our propaganda with a training and experience which few of us possessed. It has been my privilege to see the ecclesiastical mind change from unconcealed horror of what they thought the word ‘Socialism’ involved, to an understanding tolerance, if not approval, of Socialist principles.

About the middle of the nineties my mind and future were much influenced by an unexpected opportunity of systematic economic study. In the year 1894 there died Mr. Henry Hutchinson of Derby, who had long been a member of the Fabian Society. By his will he left his residuary estate to five persons, among whom were his daughter, Mr. Sidney Webb, and Mr. Edward Pease, on a wide trust, the whole sum to be expended within ten years. His daughter died shortly after her father, and bequeathed her own little fortune to her co-trustees to be disposed of at their discretion for educational purposes. I was not cognizant of the trustees’ deliberations, but I understand that they had, from first to last, something like ten thousand pounds at their disposal. They seem to have resolved that practically the whole amount should be used for educational purposes, devoting approximately one-half to popular lecturing of definitely propagandist character, and the other to the establishment of a permanent centre of university teaching, and original research in the social sciences. It was accordingly decided that, under the title of the Hutchinson Trust, courses of lectures on social and political subjects, such as ‘Socialism,’ ‘Trade Unionism,’ ‘Co-operation,’ ‘Poor Law,’ ‘Economic History,’ should be given to suitable organizations in various parts of

¹ Quoted *ibid.* p. 194.

the country. 'Lecturers were selected with care, and were in some cases given a maintenance allowance during the preparation of their lectures. Then arrangements were made for courses of four lectures each, on what may be called University Extension lines, in four or five centres in one part of the country. . . . Very careful syllabuses were prepared and widely circulated, and the whole scheme was intended to be educational rather than directly propagandist. The first lecturers engaged were J. Ramsay MacDonald and Miss Enid Stacy,'¹ followed in due course by Miss Caroline Martyn, J. Bruce Glasier, S. D. Shallard, W. S. Sanders, and myself. These lectures continued until about 1904, when the fund was exhausted.

In addition to lectures of the kind above described the trustees decided to devote part of the funds to the formation of a London School of Economics and Political Science, 'because they considered that a thorough knowledge of these sciences was a necessity for people concerned in social reconstruction, if that reconstruction was to be carried out with prudence and wisdom: and in particular it was essential that all classes of public officials should have the opportunity of learning whatever can be known of economics and politics taught on modern lines. Our old universities provided lectures on political science as it was understood by Plato and Aristotle, by Hobbes and Bentham; they did not then—and indeed they do not now—teach how New Zealand deals with strikes, how America legislates about trusts, how municipalities all over the world organize tramways.'² The object of the trustees 'was to get taught the best science that could be obtained, confident that if their own political theories were right, science would confirm them, and if they were wrong, it was better that they should be discredited.' The London School of Economics was thus founded by the Hutchinson Trustees, above-named, 'but from the first they associated others with themselves in its management, and they made no attempt to retain any special share in its control,' and the school 'never had any direct or organic connection with the Fabian Society.'³

The school began its career in the year 1895, in three small rooms on the ground floor of No. 9 John Street, in the Adelphi. It had at the beginning no library, and no place where students could work: the rooms were dark and depressing,

¹ E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 125.

² *Ibid.* p. 124.

³ *Ibid.* p. 124.

but they were conveniently situated and close to the lecture room of the Society of Arts, where some of the more popular lectures were given. Few famous schools of learning had a humbler beginning.

The first director of the school was the late Professor W. A. S. Hewins, who was later to become the secretary of the Tariff Reform League, and who provided the Protectionist Party in England with most of the facts, and nearly all the brains, at its disposal. At the time of his appointment, Professor Hewins was an Oxford tutor in economics, and his lectures were distinguished by a grace of style and by a clear English diction which all his students greatly appreciated. I knew him very well, and I admired him even more as a man than as a teacher. When the school was started the trustees appointed me to the position of secretary to the director, the intention being that I should serve in the double capacity of secretary and student, and I entered upon my duties with a determination to make the most of the educational opportunities thus presented.

It is a well-established experience that divided responsibilities of this kind are seldom successful. I was at the beginning the only person on the administrative staff, and the needs of the enterprise required that I should be in attendance from nine o'clock in the morning, and remain there until after the school closed at ten o'clock in the evening. The secretarial work involved in the foundation of a new institution was unexpectedly heavy. Lists of names had to be compiled, thousands of envelopes addressed, students' fees collected, tickets issued, and the many needs of students and lecturers had to be met. The result was that at the end of the day I was in no condition to do satisfactory work as a student, and I grew increasingly to feel that, for the first time in my life, I was not making a success of my job. The school grew rapidly in size and in importance, and it extracted from both the director and myself the last ounce of our strength. After about a year we found larger and more satisfactory quarters at No. 10 Adelphi Terrace. This really beautiful house, overlooking the Thames, was in every way suitable for our work. The lease of the premises was taken by Miss Payne Townshend, afterwards Mrs. Bernard Shaw, and she and her famous husband lived there for more than a generation. Almost as soon as we entered into possession of our new premises we began the formation of the now comprehensive Library of Political Science, which has

been used by thousands of economic students from all parts of the world.

The moving spirit in this enterprise was Mr. Sidney Webb, then in the prime of life, and with an already established literary reputation. Webb was a consistent advocate of the eight-hour day, and Mr. F. W. Galton, who was then his secretary, and myself, used playfully to accuse him of believing in this reform for every one except himself and those who worked with him. He worked himself for about sixteen hours a day, and his associates for as long as their strength lasted.

In addition to the courses of study led by the director himself, lectures were given by Professor Edwin Cannan. His method of teaching required the full attention of the student, and when he had completed his criticism of another economic writer, Marx, Marshall, or even Mill, one looked to see whether the body of the poor man did not lie bleeding at his feet. Professor H. S. Foxwell lectured on banking, Professor Bowley on statistical method, Mr. (now Sir) Halford Mackinder took courses on commercial geography, Professor Leonard Hobhouse and Mr. Graham Wallas dealt with political science, while among the most popular courses were lectures on public administration by Mr. Sidney Webb, and on German Social Democracy by Mr. Bertrand (now Earl) Russell. The school flourished like a green bay tree, and as I look back on that strenuous period I feel proud to have been associated with the beginnings of so remarkable and beneficent an institution.

My connection with the school ended suddenly and against my wish. Miss Caroline Martyn, who had been employed as one of the Hutchinson Trust Lecturers, had died suddenly, and Mr. Webb descended upon the school one morning, with the result that in less than ten minutes I had lost my job as secretary to its director and had been appointed as Caroline Martyn's successor. I was not at all happy at the change, and I was apprehensive of the nervous strain that constant lecturing and travelling would involve. I therefore accepted the new arrangement with the reverse of a thankful heart.

The trustees had entrusted the management of the popular propagandist lectures and the selection of the lecturers to the executive committee of the Fabian Society, and the lectures given under the Trust were arranged in courses of four, and were given at the same place on the same day in four successive weeks. Four such centres were arranged in one area in order to minimize the

travelling of the weekly circuit, and they were delivered before co-operative societies, trade unions, workmen's educational associations, local labour parties, miners' lodges, and suitable political organizations. Those who have done educational work of this kind know that among these specially selected groups of working men there are some of the best brains in the country (one of the best-informed students of metaphysics that I ever met was a working miner in the county of Durham), and that their questions, following the lectures, are often of a searching character. Four or five lectures of this kind each week, with daily travelling, and a fresh sleeping place each night for months on end, proved to be an exhausting business, and after a year or two the strain began to show itself in an impaired digestion and in protracted insomnia. The fee paid by the Fabian Society was fifteen shillings per lecture, and travelling expenses, the weekly earnings amounting to three pounds, out of which London lodgings had to be paid. Sometimes hospitality was provided where the lectures were given, but this was unusual, and I had, in consequence, to take additional lecturing engagements on free nights and on Sundays in order to pay my meagre hotel bills.

After this arrangement had gone on for some time Mr. Pease, the secretary of the society, wrote asking me whether I was satisfied with it, and in reply I sent him a detailed account of my expenditure for the previous week. The question of my remuneration had been raised by Mr. John Martin at a meeting of the executive committee, when one of my reports was being considered. I should never have raised the matter. The result of Mr. Martin's intervention was that I was granted one pound per week, when travelling, towards my lodging expenses. The harshest critic of the Fabian Society could not say that it squandered its money.

I have many reasons for believing that these lectures were helpful to those who heard them, for I have received pleasant references to them from men who later became Labour members of Parliament, or otherwise made their mark in public life. I gave these courses of lectures in Scotland, in the Border towns, in Northumberland, Durham, and in the Cleveland, West Riding, and other parts of Yorkshire. They were also delivered in the Midlands and the Eastern and Home Counties. It was work that required more strength than I then possessed, and the end came while I was speaking in the district of Newcastle-on-Tyne. For several nights I tried to give the lectures seated, but on the 5th November 1898

the doctor whom I consulted insisted on the remaining engagements being cancelled, and I returned home with a nervous exhaustion which lasted for several years, and from which I have never entirely recovered. My professional work for the Fabian Society was thus terminated, although I have continuously served it in a voluntary capacity, and for more than twenty years I was privileged to be a member of its executive committee.

CHAPTER IX

RELIGION: DOUBTS AND APPRECIATIONS

A fire, a mist, and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jellyfish and a saurian,
And a cave where the cave-men dwell.
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod,
Some call it Evolution,
Others call it God.

WILLIAM HERBERT CARUTH.

This man thinks that he knows, though he knows nothing; but I neither know nor think that I know. I seem to be in some small way wiser than he, in this very point, that with regard to those things that I do not know, neither do I think that I know them.—PLATO, *The Apology of Socrates*, chapter vi.

THE choice of a philosophy of life, and of a personal attitude towards the then current political parties and economic theories, proved to be, as I have explained in an earlier chapter, capable of a quick and easy decision. There the issue seemed at once clear and simple. But the problem of my attitude towards the conventional theories respecting the origin and government of the universe, and towards the intimate questions of prayer and of immortality, was not to be so easily settled. The pathway towards a serene and abiding peace in these great questions of the religious life, proved to be both hard and uncertain. No immediate and splendid vision of a new and inspiring gospel came to me; I achieved spiritual happiness only slowly, and as the result of much reflection and inward strife. But concerning the method by which my difficulties were to be faced I was in no doubt whatever. There should be no shrinking from whatever truth research might reveal, neither should there be any compromise with the temptation to adopt merely congenial conclusions.

From the very beginning of my inquiries my mind recoiled with horror from the red records of ecclesiastical persecution, and I resented, with every fibre of my being, the arrogant hostility of ecclesiastics to the growth of science, and to the freedom of thought

and opinion. On that account alone I was immediately, definitely, and I fear passionately, anti-clerical in outlook and temper, and there was in consequence the possibility that this strong bias might affect my judgment on the questions I had set myself to study. These were in themselves immense. To make an attempt to solve the mystery of the universe was like trying to hold with one hand a globe that was too big to grasp. None of the traditional explanations—loudly proclaimed as satisfactory by the churches and theologians—appeared to face the fundamental problem, while the Mosaic account of creation seemed to be merely a picturesque speculation. Moreover, the anxieties of my mind were personal and, for the most part, incommunicable. I did not then know any one to whom I could have mentioned this inner conflict, without almost certain misunderstanding, and I afterwards considered this as fortunate, for ‘when the soul arms for battle, she goes forth alone.’

Since the time when these anxieties concerning my spiritual life took place many years have passed; but even now, I find it almost indelicate to write about them. They seem to belong to the inviolable chambers of my own being, and to expose them to the criticism of those who have never experienced what spiritual suffering means is altogether distasteful. But to omit from this record any account of the mental anxieties, explorations, doubts, and accommodations, through which I went, would deprive it of that which, perhaps more than anything else, gives to it coherence and meaning.

As a youth my conception of God was associated with an overpowering sense of guilt and fear. Nothing in the religious instruction that I had received had been more continuously impressed upon my mind than that, in common with my fellow men, I had been ‘born in sin and shapen in iniquity’; that I merited destruction at the hands of the outraged Creator of the world; that He was a God of wrath and vengeance; that in some dreadful celestial ledger all my sinful desires, thoughts, and deeds were remorselessly recorded, and that the only method by which I might, through God’s grace, escape from well-merited punishment in the quenchless fires of hell, was by complete repentance and continual prayer.

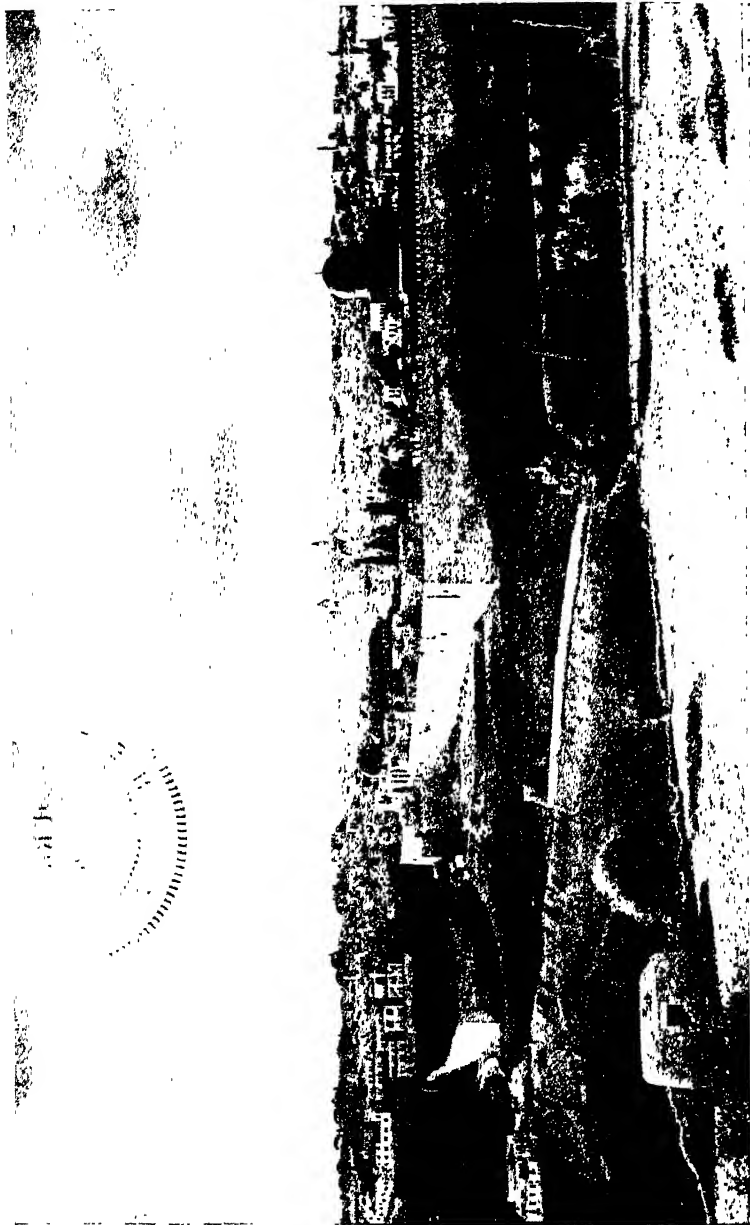
This crude orthodoxy cast a blight upon my young life, and my sense of personal wickedness was intensified by disturbing questions which arose in my mind; questions which I dared not avow, and which I could neither answer nor suppress. Why, for example, should I ‘fear’ God? Was He not a God of Love; a forgiving

heavenly Father? How could He be, at one and the same time, a compassionate parent and a remorseless judge? And, since man had been created in God's own image, how could he be so incurably wicked? Had not Jesus himself thought that man, with all his faults, was worth dying for? Then, if man was indeed so hopelessly evil, why had he been created? 'Did the hand then of the Potter shake?'

Questions such as these would never let me go. There were, also, the disturbing problems of pain and providence, and of the existence of evil. I could not accept the facile explanation that evil continued to exist because God did not care to destroy it, or that He allowed pain because He was indifferent to the sufferings of the beings that He had created. What, then, was the explanation of these enigmas? Was it indeed possible that God was not all-powerful, but that, like man, He was himself engaged in a desperate struggle with the evil forces of the world?

When, in later years, I attempted to master these great problems, I got much help from a study of the origin and growth of the idea of God in the mind of man, and from the story of its development as recorded in the Hebrew scriptures. I traced the evolution of man's conception of the ruling powers of the universe, from its crude polytheistic beginnings to the dignified monotheism of some of the later religions, and I discovered that only slowly had he come to think of one Supreme Power, behind the visible world. The same principle of development appeared in the story of the Bible. In that, too, the earliest conception of God was of a primitive order. Jehovah walked in the garden and sought to spy upon His creatures; He ate of the flesh of beasts, wrestled with Hebrew patriarchs, demanded a share in the spoils of conquest, and He displayed almost every human imperfection. Then, as the Bible story develops, the idea of God becomes purified and ennobled, moving away from the purely anthropomorphic figure of Jehovah, towards a belief in an eternal force which at length becomes 'Our Father.' When we met Him in the earlier books of the Bible, God was little more than a national or racial hero: 'Who is like unto thee, Jehovah, among the gods?' 'There is none like thee in heaven above or in the earth beneath.' Between that primitive belief in God as a valiant and powerful patriot, and that of the forgiving Eternal Father of the later books, were ages of meditation and cleansing moral experience.

During my study of these great issues I read many metaphysical



From Marcu Beza's 'Land of Many Religions'

JERUSALEM FROM THE NORTH (p. 242)

books, which, notwithstanding the erudition of their authors, provided me with less comfort than confusion. Almost without exception they appeared to come out at that 'same door where in they went.' My decision to abandon them was partly induced by Emerson, who, with an impatience greater even than my own, had asked: 'Who has not looked into a metaphysical book? And what sensible man ever looked twice?'

Eventually I came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to leave the study of a problem which I clearly could not solve. The choice appeared to be whether it were wiser permanently to spend my time and strength in possibly futile metaphysical speculation, or to prepare myself for such pressing duties as the tangible, and tangled, world presented to me. I therefore decided that, inasmuch as I could neither measure the infinite nor grasp the eternal, I would more diligently apply myself to the religious and social conditions that I could comprehend and perhaps modify. I would try to touch, with perhaps a glimmer of understanding and usefulness, the human end of the problem of existence. I have never convinced myself that this decision was unwise, for how could I, or the ignorant and assertive fundamentalist, the crystal-gazer, or the presumptuous spiritualist medium, succeed where minds like those of Kant and others had failed? I in no way despised the engaging study of the problem of the universe, and I have continued to read metaphysical books, but I felt myself called to other and, as I thought, more fruitful tasks. Since the time that these decisions were made, man's knowledge of the universe has been vastly extended, and he lives to-day in a world that is altogether more inspiring and august than that which his fathers knew. His knowledge concerning it will grow, but I believe that, for this age at least, the 'unknowable' will remain unknown.

Then there was the problem of prayer. Could I pray? A learned theologian, attempting to decide who could or could not pray, once said: 'If you can say Thou to the Infinite, you can pray: if you cannot say Thou, you cannot pray.' Prayer presented no difficulty to the patriarchs of the Old Testament, because they thought of God as an extended human personality. It was on that assumption that Abraham had prayed for the doomed city of Sodom; Moses had been influenced by the same belief when he appealed to God, after the people whom he led had fashioned for themselves a god of gold; Solomon had the same conception of

God when he prayed that the petition of the stranger might also be heard in the Temple of Israel; David had also thought of God as invested with a larger human personality when, in the Psalms, he prayed for peace and forgiveness. And was it not also the thought of Jesus when, in Gethsemane, he had asked: 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me'?

Many of the prayers that I heard at this period were avowedly selfish, and sometimes they seemed to me to be ignoble. Men prayed aloud for success in business, for material things, for rain or for dry weather, and it shocked my sense of fitness that those specks of wayward human dust should presume to ask God to suspend for their personal ends the operation of natural laws. There was also another type of prayer that aroused my deepest scorn. God was beseeched to send the blessing of health to areas afflicted by filthy slums; sobriety to cities and villages infested by profit-making drinking establishments; but such blasphemous petitioners appeared to be altogether unaware that they were asking God to do for them what it was within their power to do for themselves—asking Him in fact to do for them what He might well be waiting for them to do for Him.

That prayer had nobler and more defensible uses I was, of course, aware. It could be used, for example, by tempted and troubled souls, as an appeal from their normal to their highest selves; as an attempt to put into the forefront of their consciousness the resolve to try to live according to their most enlightened conception of the highest and the best. George Meredith, himself a convinced agnostic, once wrote: 'Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.' In this sense the habit of prayer, it seemed to me, could be defended, but I believed then, as I believe now, that to appeal to God to take upon Himself purely human tasks was thoroughly indefensible. Arthur Clough came nearer to expressing my own conception of human life and duty:

Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,
And thou shalt do, O man!

The great problem of the immortality of the soul also greatly interested me, although I was never alarmed at the possibility of the extinction at death of my personal identity. Consequently, I never made a frightened daily audit of the accounts of my soul, nor hourly felt its pulse to make sure that it was well. I never dissipated spiritual energy in thinking about my everlasting bread

and butter, or in calculating the amount of my celestial goods. There may be a life beyond the grave, but I do not know; and I think it probable that if God had wished men to know the details of the after-life—assuming that one is to be—He would not have made the medium or experimenter His messenger. The attempts of these spiritualistic burglars to pick the locks of heaven always offended my sense of propriety. I have never wanted to ‘call up’ the dead. It seemed to me less presumptuous to wait. One world at a time was sufficient for me.

La vie est brève,
Un peu d’espoir,
Un peu de rêve,
Et puis—bonsoir.

Eadwine of Northumbria is said to have declared that human life was ‘as a swallow’s flight across a lighted hall . . . the swallow flieth in at one door, tarrieth awhile in the light, and thereafter flieth out again into the darkness . . ., but of what it was before, and what it shall be after, we know naught.’ This ancient ignorance has not yet been superseded by exact knowledge:

The Present, the Present is all thou hast
For thy sure possessing;
Like the Patriarch’s angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing.

The question of my spiritual relationship to the personality and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was easy in comparison with the inexplicable problems of life, death, and immortality. For some years—privately and at the University of Heidelberg, I studied with care the whole problem of the historical existence of Jesus. There appeared to me to be no documentary evidence available until towards the end of the second century. What might not have happened to the story of his life in those two obscure centuries? How much of the gospel story concerning him was based upon fact, and how much was mere accretion? I read a good deal on this interesting problem, and in the end I accepted as a working hypothesis the likelihood that, in what Huxley had called the primary strata of Christian literature and experience, a teacher and prophet called Jesus of Nazareth had existed; and that his insight, sympathy, and moral stature had been so incomparably higher than that of previous aspirants to the title of the Messiah, that around his gracious personality the story of the gospels had been written.

That story, separated from much that was obviously doubtful,

made a powerful appeal to me. The persecution that he had received at the hands of the ecclesiastical and secular authorities gave him an immediate and an abiding place in my affections. If the priests and the patricians were the enemies of Jesus, I was, precisely on that account, his friend. No teacher who had been hated by church or synagogue was ever rejected by me.

I was, moreover, attracted by the story of Jesus on other grounds, but mainly because he also was a heretic and a rebel. He had broken away from the traditional limitations of the accepted rabbinical teachers, and had proclaimed a new faith for a new age. He had been too great to become the approved and docile purveyor of conventional shibboleths. The spiritual heir of the prophets of the Old Testament, he was at the same time the interpreter of the needs of his own day. Moses might have said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, 'but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.'¹

Jesus sprang from the working classes, and the movement that he founded was one of poor men. That fact also counted heavily in my response to his appeal; and I was, in addition, deeply interested in certain aspects of his teaching. I had become aware that the golden rule of human conduct, which so compactly summarized his ethical standpoint, had been proclaimed by other teachers, notably by Confucius, before his time; but Jesus had minted the gold it contained into current spiritual coin, and he had given to it a new and finer emphasis. 'As propounded by the Chinese sage, the rule appears to mean: "Keep the balance true between thyself and thy neighbour; illustrate in thy conduct the principle of equilibrium." As impressed upon his disciples by Jesus it means: "Look upon thy neighbour as thy other self; act towards him as if thou wert he."' ²

That the mind of Jesus had been deeply influenced by the thought and teaching of the Hebrew prophets, seemed to me to be beyond question. But, as I understood him, he regarded his own teaching to be more than a mere echo of their thought; in his mind, it was a continuation and an expansion. The tree was undoubtedly of their planting; but he cut from it some of the dead wood, and he grafted on to the living part of it the growth of a rarer and richer fruit. There were, however, some aspects of his teaching which seemed to me to be quite inapplicable to the world as I then knew it. The injunction not to resist evil, for example, appeared to

¹ Matthew v 38-9.

² Felix Adler, *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 32.

have no relation to the social conditions which prevailed in England in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century; and I was too youthfully pugnacious to convince myself that submission to the forces of evil could be justified as an ethical principle. It seemed to me probable that when a spontaneous moral indignation prompted a man to try to resist and dethrone evil, both in himself and in the world, he could best justify his conduct to his own conscience.

I was aware, of course, that it was possible to give to the injunction not to resist evil an altogether different interpretation from that above indicated. There was the possibility that it might mean that a man should be careful lest the evil that he was moved to resist in others—the evil of avarice, pride, and passion—should be also a part of his own nature. But Jesus did not appear to me to be a consistent witness to his own teaching, for, although he never sought to resist injury to his own person, whenever the principles of his message were assailed, he struck back at the aggressors with an instant and savage precision. I was therefore convinced that evil should be resisted; that while the devil would never voluntarily abdicate, nor be prayed out of death-fostering slums and drinking dens, he could be swept and swilled out of them by the righteous anger of an offended people.

These comments are not intended to be even a summary of my reaction to the personality and teaching of Jesus, but I cannot leave the subject without making it clear that I never regarded him as a forerunner of the Socialist philosophy which had so decisively influenced my own life. To assume, as many of my friends did assume, that because Jesus told the young man who had great possessions to sell all that he had in order to give the proceeds to the poor, he was therefore a Socialist was, as I believed, altogether speculative and inadvisable. As a Socialist advocate I would gladly have assisted my propaganda with the prestige of his name, could I honestly have done so. But the teachings of Jesus appeared to me to be different from the principles of Socialism which we were then advocating.

Socialism aims to deal with the immediate, practical, and often temporary needs of communities, with the technical questions of government, of banking, currency, taxation, and tariffs, with the changing issues of the production and distribution of material goods, and with the highly complex details of administrative efficiency. Jesus, on the other hand, was altogether unconcerned

with the practical and temporary issues of his day, and because of this it appeared to me appropriate to leave his name outside the current Socialist controversy. So far as the details of his life are known to us, he appears to have detached himself from the political movements of his time, although he was surrounded by, and was keenly aware of, precisely those social problems which wise political action on Socialist lines would have solved.

There was a housing question, for example; the homes of the poor were small and dark, because the widow had to light the candle to find the lost piece of silver. The traders cheated those who purchased their goods, by neglecting to give 'good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.' They sold wine in rotten skins; there was an acute unemployment problem, 'no man having hired' the idlers in the market-place; there was a social evil; the upper servants were haughty and brutal to the lower; there existed personal distress, civil strife, and inequitable taxation; and, as in the days of the prophets, the rich men ate up the vineyard, ground the faces of the poor, took from them burdens of wheat, while the civic officials turned judgment to wormwood.

Jesus was acutely aware of these evils; he also knew that a time had been foretold when the common people 'shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble'; but there is little evidence that he resented the existing economic and political inequalities. The thoughts of Jesus were, indeed, on other things. Agitations concerning taxation left him entirely unmoved. Caesar could have his dirty money provided that 'God also was given His due.' He believed that if men sought first the kingdom of righteousness all else would come to them. His mission, as I understood it, was neither secular nor national, it was ethical and spiritual. He thought of man, not as a political unit, but as a moral personality, as a child of God, and he saw no other way of reaching perfection, except through a man's own soul.

The hold which the name of Jesus maintains over the imagination of men is, above all else, due to the fact that he rose above, and was unaffected by, the temporary and exasperating issues of the common day, and because he, in the midst of them, continuously directed men's thoughts to finer issues. On this high plane—above the meaner places where men intrigue and fight and fail—I, at least, was content to leave him.

The question may arise in the mind of the reader why, since my appreciation of the figure of Jesus was so pronounced, I did not

associate myself with one of the many churches which aim to do homage to his name. Why did I, like Ephraim, choose a life of spiritual isolation? In an earlier chapter of this book I have given an adequate answer to that inquiry. I shall never again be an unwelcome guest in any church.

There were, however, other and weightier reasons. Every church with which I was acquainted claimed that the ethical teachings of Jesus bore the stamp of finality; that they encompassed all the goodness that was, or could exist, in the world. For man there remained only the duty to accept and apply them. There might be adaptations, even expansions, of the truths announced, but there could be no substitutions nor renunciations. There finality had been reached.

The question here is not whether my judgments on these important matters were sound, or otherwise. I am trying to write a true record of my spiritual experiences; but it appeared to me then, and it has remained as an unwavering conviction in my mind, that the revelation of truth is progressive, and that man's appreciation of the eternal values is continuously expanding. And I consequently believed that the truths proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth should be accepted as foundations upon which newer truths might be built. I believed, too, that Jesus was a man as were the men around him, that he had arisen out of the dim past as they themselves had arisen, and that like them, and like ourselves, he had to tread the hard pathway of trial and disappointment; that the gnawing sense of imperfection came to him as it comes to us, and that with no other equipment than his own incomparable insight and courage, except perhaps, here and there, a hint from the prophets, he became the announcer of everlasting truths.

These appreciations provided a basis, which later study has not destroyed, for the spiritual consolations of my life:

Hath man no second life? *Pitch this one high!*
 Sits there no judge in heaven, our sins to see?
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
 Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
*If we then too, can be such men as he!*¹

¹ Matthew Arnold.

CHAPTER X

THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE RISE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

The union of men in a common effort for a common object, this is and always has been the true school of character.—W. K. CLIFFORD.

FROM the very first days of the Socialist assault on modern capitalism, it was understood even by the dumbest among us that its success depended upon the extent to which the whole fighting force of labour could be organized and persuaded to join in the attack. The entrenched position of the capitalist, and the lack of either training or equipment of the Socialist forces, made the task of the latter appear quite hopeless. The capitalist Goliath had behind him the physical power of the State; the Socialist David had scarcely a stone in his sling. He was, moreover, assailed by the Press with all the slander and misrepresentation that purchased literary talent could invent. Every necessitous journalist who could write a defamatory paragraph worked overtime in defence of the capitalist and his cause: the politicians were his admiring satellites; the clergy, for the most part, his obedient menials. The unenlightened multitude, taught to believe that their privations were due to the operation of natural and immutable laws, and not to the faulty organization of society, applauded the exploiter, hooted the Socialist who opposed him, and voted for him on demand. The Socialist had no money for either organization or ammunition; he had no Press, no approving public, and he could not meet his opponent on equal terms. His assurances that he really did not propose to burn the churches or destroy the institution of the family, and that the goal of his endeavours was merely the establishment of an industrial democracy, were designedly ignored. He was accused of advocating sex anarchy and free love, and outraged piety gathered up its skirts when he passed. He was the Ishmael of the smug Victorian world.

The times have changed, and the Socialist advocate of to-day has to meet a situation of another kind. He is no longer isolated or imprisoned: he is flattered and sometimes even invited to dinner; and the new attitude is at least as menacing as was the old. Those

of us who have seen the rise and growth of the Socialist movement in England are to-day in some danger of forgetting the quarry whence we were hewn. When the fight began we were happy in proportion as we were despised, for although we knew that we were outcasts, we also knew that Ishmael did not in fact die in the wilderness. 'And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget; and I will make him a great nation.'¹

It was with this faith in our hearts that we set out to use every suitable opportunity to win to our side the forces of organized labour, and the trade unions were in consequence the immediate and special objects of our attention. These bodies were both numerically powerful and politically important. I have never understood why the employing classes should have hated and feared the old trade union movement, which was both politically neutral and economically innocuous. Almost contentedly it fed out of their hands. My personal experience as a trade unionist is of a limited character, but I have never known any of the many unions with which I have been acquainted knowingly to be opposed to the interests of the industries in which they were engaged, and there was certainly nothing in either the theory or the practice of the old type of trade union which need have caused alarm. The unions were, in fact, so essential a part of modern industrial organization that if they had not existed it would have been necessary to create them.

The employers of forty years ago, nevertheless, honestly believed that trade unions were a menace to their power and prosperity, and they were afraid lest, under the influence of labour organizers, the docile workman should develop revolutionary tendencies. They deeply resented the irritating desire of the wage-earner to continue to live. Yet in the trade unionism of that time there was nothing that should have frightened them. The unions were neither political, anarchic, nor revolutionary. 'To the great majority of trade unionists the theories of the leaders at either date [1833-4 and 1889-90] did but embody a vague aspiration after a more equitable social order.'² Thus, the trade unionism of the nineties was thoroughly tame and safe. A dutiful subserviency was its main characteristic.

¹ Genesis xvii 20.

² Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 404.

It happens that the address that is read to every new member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union at the initiatory ceremony has remained unaltered from the time the union was founded in 1851, and its admonitions are as far removed from anything like revolutionary fervour as is a pious prayer for the dead. The manly virtues are to be cultivated; thrift is to be practised; mutual help is enjoined, and the whole of those present agree 'to conduct ourselves in such a manner that employers, noticing our regular conduct, will be led to value our institution and inquire for our members when in want of workmen.' Yet this respectable and carefully deferential movement, whose members were as harmless as rabbits, frightened the governing classes, and for two generations disturbed the manufacturers in their sleep.

This fear of trade unionism, which led the Press to slander its leaders as incendiary parasites who preyed upon the workers and incited them to strike against their self-sacrificing employers, was both deeply rooted and widespread. Much of it was an inheritance from previous centuries. Whenever famine and plague had reduced the supply of available labour, wages, in accordance with the law of supply and demand, rose, to the inconvenience and the great resentment of the employing classes, and after the Black Death in the reign of Edward III, the rise of wages was restricted by law, punishment being provided for those who paid and those who received more than the statutory rate. The anti-trade union complex arose out of these conditions. The last thing that the employers desired when labour was scarce was 'free labour in a free market,' and the Statute of Labourers (25 Edward III) reflected the old conception of one economic law for the employer and another for the labourer. When wages fell the worker starved; when wages rose, they were restricted by law. Then, as now, the employers hated interference by the State, except when such interference served their own interests. Any attempt on the part of the labourers to take advantage of the natural rise of wages was forcibly repressed as 'the malice of servants in husbandry.' Of the Statute of Labourers and similar laws Hallam remarks:

'Such an enhancement in the price of labour, though founded on exactly the same principles as regulate the value of any other commodity, is too frequently treated as a sort of crime by lawgivers, who seem to grudge the poor that transient amelioration of their lot, which the progress of population, or other analogous

circumstances, will, without any interference, very rapidly take away.'¹

From the time when the old statutes regulating labour were passed to the day when they were repealed, Parliament encouraged the belief that trade unionism was dangerous to the State, a menace to industry, and a political and social nuisance. It is not surprising, therefore, that the manufacturers of two generations ago should have regarded trade unionism as a foul excrescence upon an otherwise fair and profit-making land. There never existed a more ill-founded prejudice. The outstanding characteristic of the trade unionism they hated and feared so much was its firm devotion to religious nonconformity, temperance, and Gladstonian Liberalism. The influence of Gladstone among trade unionists was unprecedented and apparently unassailable: what he wanted they too wanted; what he hated they despised. He was the creator, inspirer, and chief bulwark of the Liberal-Labourism that we young Socialists set ourselves to destroy. The Gladstonian hold over the trade union leaders was increased by the method of control by favour and by appointment. In this Gladstone merely continued what others had begun, but the effect of the appointment of Henry Broadhurst in 1886, of Thomas Burt in 1892, to ministerial positions, was to harness to the Liberal machine the whole of the trade union movement. A certain number of working-class leaders were to be assisted to enter Parliament as supporters of the Liberal Party, and nearly every trade union leader of the time promptly held out his hand and said: 'Here am I: send me.'

I knew Henry Broadhurst only slightly, but Thomas Burt very well; they were both of them men of fine character, and they added distinction to the Liberal Party; but their election to Parliament under Liberal auspices and control was not the beginning of independent Labour representation, and it is doubtful whether it even helped in that direction. The intention of the Liberal Party was quite certainly to pacify the demand of Labour for parliamentary representation, by giving a few seats to carefully selected trade union leaders. Those who accepted these distinctions were in no way disloyal to their class. But not one of them ever dreamed of making trade unionism an independent political force; they were, on the contrary, opposed to every such proposal. The fine old guard of English trade unionism were political radicals with an

¹ Hallam, *Europe during the Middle Ages* (edition 1869, p. 566), quoted by Mrs. Besant, *The Trade Union Movement*, p. 5.

inherited bias towards economic individualism. There was scarcely a man among them of whom the workers and the country had not the right to be proud: they were sincere, clean-living, capable, devoted, and incorruptible; and they accepted the social philosophy of their age. Their aim was to secure benefits for the worker within the accepted framework of the industrial order—better wages, shorter hours, sanitary conditions in the factory, and protection against avoidable injuries in mine and mill. Their political proposals left the landlord and the capitalist in the undisturbed possession and control of rent, profit, and interest. They envisaged a society in which wages would be higher, employment safe and secure, and to this modest programme was added ‘a vague aspiration after a more equitable social order.’

We young Socialists had a sincere respect for these proved servants of their class, but their social philosophy had to be opposed, and our attempt to win trade unionism for Socialism was greatly helped by the tragedy and the proved futility of the ‘strike and starve’ method of settling industrial disputes with which they had been associated. The only weapon at the disposal of the trade union leader was the disastrous and outworn method of the strike, in which the cumulative hunger of the strikers’ children was pitted against the capital reserves of the well-fed employer. It was a mad gamble in which the dice were always loaded against the striker. We did not, however, propose to abandon ‘industrial action,’ but rather to supplement it by political action. In our view Labour in restricting itself to the method of the strike was in the position of a half-starved David, compelled to meet the giant Goliath with one arm tied behind his back, and with badly selected stones in his sling.

It was a bonny and joyous fight. This is not the place for a detailed account of the political and social history of the period, nor can I recount the many incidents involving misunderstanding and broken relationships, which the attack on the old unionism involved; I can deal only with tendencies and achievements, and refer the reader to the available histories of this period. We were, of course, misrepresented, and our motives were misunderstood. We regarded ourselves as forerunners; those whose work we criticized thought us firebrands, and blistering words were used on both sides. All that is now far behind us: the new unionism fought and conquered the old, and none of the splendid old pioneers, some of whom happily remain with us, would wish to return to the ancient

ways. I learned much from them, and I lay a sincere tribute on the tombs of the dead.

I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left wafted hither,
I have perused it, own it is admirable (moving awhile among it),
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve more than it
deserves,

Regarding it intently a long while, then dismissing it,
I stand in my place with my own day here.¹

The demand for an independent political Labour Party was the natural consequence of our active Socialist propaganda, but the date when that demand became articulate is, I believe, uncertain. The Fabian Society had been publicly calling on the trade unions from 1886 onward to put forward fifty candidates of their own as an independent party,² but the idea did not receive widespread approval until the last decade of the nineteenth century, although the annual conference of Labour organizations provided ample opportunities for both conversion and decision. On the other hand, to imagine that the modern Labour Party began with the formation, in 1900, of the Labour Representation Committee, would be to ignore the enthusiasm and the conditions out of which it arose. The ground for the sowing had been prepared by the labour of many previous generations, for the basic problem of the economic relationship of labour to capital was as old as written history. 'Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.'³

The principle of the economic struggle is, indeed, the same throughout the ages: the incidents of the contest and the occasion for it may vary; the fundamental trouble remains constant, and it operates wherever one man, or any minority of men, own and control the means by which all men must live.

The question of Labour representation had been raised as early as the second Trade Union Congress, which met in Birmingham in 1869, when a paper on Direct Labour Representation in Parliament was read by Mr. A. Walton of Brecon, who asked pertinently: 'Why in the session of Parliament which had just closed not one of its members had taken the trouble to ask: "Why more than a million and a half of working men were in a state of compulsory

¹ Walt Whitman.

² See *Fabian Tract* 41.

³ Exodus v 15-16.

idleness in England?" That was an unmistakable proof of want of sympathy in the House for the wants of the working classes. . . . working men must unite to form a working men's party, and in all future elections *where two Liberal candidates were to be elected, they must insist upon nominating one, allowing the middle classes to nominate the other.*¹

This demand was for representation within the Liberal Party, and not for Labour as an independent political force, for, as the late Mr. Frank Rose pointed out, 'not one of the "Old Brigade" leaders ever regarded the use of the Unions' power in the direction of making for a definitely organized political force as a possibility, and certainly not one of them attempted to cultivate such a project.' Three years later, in 1872, the need for Independent Labour Representation was brought more clearly before the Trade Union Congress held at Nottingham, after the House of Commons had accepted an amendment inserted by the House of Lords to the Trade Union Bill then being considered. This amendment was carried in the Commons on the 19th June by 147 votes as against 97, 'a majority of 50 composed of Tory and Liberal capitalists.' The report dealing with this incident was signed by men like Mr. George Howell, Mr. Alexander McDonald, Mr. George Potter, Mr. Joseph Leicester, and Mr. Lloyd Jones, but their faith in the Liberal Party appeared not to be in the least degree disturbed.

It is advisable to remember in this connection that the Liberal Party did not welcome Labour representatives in Parliament, even when they were tame and obedient, for at the general election of 1874, although fourteen candidates went to the poll, only Mr. Burt and Mr. McDonald, the nominees of the Northumberland miners, were elected, and only four out of the fourteen were allowed straight fights with Tory opponents. The Trade Union Congress of that year rejected a motion in favour of definite parliamentary action, and accepted a resolution 'that each representative be at liberty to take what action he thinks proper in the town or city in which he resides.'²

The growth of a political consciousness among the members of the trade unions of the time, began seriously to alarm the employing classes. The manifesto of the Employers' Federation, issued in December 1873, after bemoaning the fact that the unions had annual congresses and large resources, complained that 'they have

¹ Quoted by F. H. Rose, *The Coming Force*, p. 23.

² *Ibid.* p. 26.

³ *Ibid.* p. 29.

a well-paid and ample staff of leaders, most of them experienced in the command of strikes, many of them skilful as organizers, all forming a class apart, a profession with interests distinct, though not necessarily antagonistic to those of the workpeople they lead, but from their very *raison d'être*, hostile to those of the employers, *and the rest of the community* . . . they organize frequent meetings, at which paid speakers inoculate the working classes with their ideas and urge them to dictate terms to candidates for Parliament,' and the employers were appealed to 'to join and support the newly-formed National Federation of Associated Employers.'

The employers thus determined to meet the trade unions on their own lines, by organizing their forces for both defence and attack. There were few people who blamed them for taking this step, and least of all the organized workers: but, as is usual with British manufacturers, they were behindhand by at least two generations. In the end, however, the unions found themselves confronted by a capitalism which was better organized than themselves and, notwithstanding their accumulated wealth and negotiating strength, they found themselves powerless to do anything, as unions, either to produce a 'more equitable social order,' or even effectually to protect their own members in the limited spheres of wages and hours. *They were therefore compelled to choose between impotence in the industrial sphere, and the possibility of success through organized political power.*

Thus, when we began our propaganda among the members of the unions, they were already disillusioned with, and impatient of, the old methods, and they were won to the new faith with unexpected ease and speed. They were detached from Liberalism and Toryism as easily as grapes are taken from a vine. The younger members of the unions, ready for a new adventure, were ours almost from the beginning of our campaign, and they carried the challenge to the inside of the unions. There, they persuaded and pestered; they cajoled and captured; first of all, those whose political affiliations were only nominal, while the older members, heroes of many stubborn fights and devoted to the traditions of the Liberal Party, resisted sullenly, protested with decreasing venom, and, saying they would never consent, in the end consented, and became supporters of the new policy. Many of the old leaders remained characteristically loyal to the ideals that had governed their lives. Their long service, and the affection of their fellow-workers, which they had won by solid service, gave them the right

to criticize, scold, and protest; but I do not remember that they lost either the respect or the personal friendship of those whose disturbing political views they thought it their duty to oppose.

I had the privilege of knowing Thomas Burt, John Wilson, John Burnett, Fred Maddison, and others, representative of all that was best in English working-class character, and I do not expect to meet finer men. They were loyal to their principles, candid as critics, often mulishly stubborn, but always to be relied upon as friends and as colleagues. They were of the salt of the earth, and I salute their names in passing. The fight which we waged against them for a less 'vague aspiration after a more equitable social order' was bitterly contested; but it left no bad blood behind. In ten years the new unionism had conquered. To the old tradition which it superseded 'hail and farewell.'

These references to the various political and religious movements with which I have been connected are not intended as a history of any of them, but even the shortest account of the origin and growth of the British Labour Party would be misleading if it ignored the part played in its creation and nurture by James Keir Hardie and the Independent Labour Party. It was through the rugged personality of Hardie that the demand for independent political action first took a definite shape. At the Trade Union Congress, held at Swansea in 1887, when Hardie objected to 'Labour representatives identifying themselves with one political party,' he was promptly shouted down. His youth and inexperience were placed in contrast with the proved wisdom of the older trade-union statesmen, and their authority and practice were enthusiastically reaffirmed; but the young mischief-maker continued his assault at the gate. When the congress met at Bradford in the following year, the platform, although feeling themselves masters of the situation, had nevertheless taken steps to deal with any difficulty which might arise. But by that time an unexpected situation had developed.

Earlier in the year a vacancy had occurred in the representation of Mid-Lanark, and Hardie had contested the seat as an Independent Labour candidate, under circumstances which settled for ever the question of a Labour Party within the Liberal Party organization. The treasurer of the Labour Electoral Association had sent to Hardie the sum of £400 towards the expenses of the campaign, the Scottish Home Rule Association also gave its support; while the London Branch, of which Mr. Ramsay Mac-

Donald was then the secretary, sent to Hardie a supporting resolution, and a letter of commendation. In the middle of the campaign the Liberal Party made a colossal blunder. Not realizing either the nature or the rising temper of the new movement, it offered to Hardie personally, and through him to the Labour cause, an affront for which it was never forgiven. Mr. Threlfall, who was the secretary of the Labour Electoral Association, arrived in the constituency to support Hardie's candidature, but he had been interviewed on the journey, and when he arrived at the Labour committee rooms he informed Hardie that he had been 'in conference with the Liberals at the George Hotel, and you've got to retire.' Hardie is reported to have risen in anger from his seat, and Threlfall left the room apparently in a hurry; on the following day Mr. Schnadhorst, the Liberal organizer, tried and failed to interview Hardie, but later, under pressure from Mr. C. A. V. Conybeare, M.P., Hardie was induced to meet Sir George Trevelyan, who promised him, on behalf of the Liberal Party, a safe seat at the general election, and a salary of £300 a year, if he would consent to withdraw his candidature for Mid-Lanark. Sir George Trevelyan was a gentleman, and he did not mean to be offensive, but his proposal revealed the sort of relationship that was desired between Labour representatives and the Liberal Party. Hardie refused the bribe, stood his ground, and polled 617 votes. But the fight for independence which he made was to have significant results.

Shortly after this initial fight the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, and other groups of Socialist workers throughout the country, stimulated by the example of the newly-formed Scottish Labour Party, which had some thirty branches, were advocating a breakaway from the old political bondage to the Liberals, and there was a general desire that an attempt should be made to unify these organizations into one national party. Hardie and Burns were already in Parliament as Independent Labour members, and at the Trade Union Congress, held in Glasgow in 1892, a resolution was passed in favour of Independent Labour representation. Three previous meetings of the congress had passed similar resolutions, which had been placed upon its records, and forgotten. The Glasgow Congress took the matter more seriously, and 'that same day an informal meeting of delegates favourable to the formation of a party in conformity with the resolution was held, and it was decided that a conference of advanced

bodies willing to assist in promoting the object should be held.’¹ This conference was held on the 13th and 14th January 1893, in the rooms of the Labour Institute at Bradford, when 121 delegates attended. ‘All manner of Labour and Socialist societies were represented, the chief, however, being Labour Clubs, branches of the S.D.F. and the Fabian Society, the Scottish Labour Party, and several trade organizations. Hardie was elected chairman and, despite many forebodings of division and failure, the gathering set itself to the task of formulating a constitution in a thoroughly earnest and harmonious spirit. The name “I.L.P.,” which had already become a common appellation of the new movement, and had been assumed by many of the local clubs, was adopted almost unanimously in preference to that of the “Socialist Labour Party.”’² Among those present were George Bernard Shaw, Robert Blatchford, Robert Smillie, Pete Curran, Miss Katharine St. John Conway, Joseph Burgess, James Sexton, Ben Tillett, and many other well-known Socialist workers. My employment at Woolwich unfortunately made it impossible for me to be present at this historic meeting, but I was connected with the I.L.P. from its earliest days, and the greater portion of my political advocacy was done on its platforms.

The I.L.P. was avowedly and uncompromisingly Socialist, and those of us who were its advocates attacked capitalism in every speech that we made. Our propaganda dealt specially with the problems of poverty and unemployment, and we attempted to show that both of these scourges were inevitable under a purely capitalist industry. We placed in vivid contrast the poverty of the workers and the advertised luxuries of the rich, the one-roomed tenement of the labourer, who created the wealth, with the ‘mansions of the just,’ who spent it. We analysed the figures of production and distribution, and we showed that those who worked the hardest were doomed to privation, while those ‘who toiled not, neither did they spin’ were clothed in purple and fine linen. We contrasted the death rates prevailing in Hoxton with those of Hampstead, the standards of life seen in ‘Rag Fair’ with those of Mayfair. We told the workers that Liberalism and Toryism, each of which claimed to be the friend of the worker, had been in office throughout the preceding generations, and that if those political parties had desired to abolish these sad social contrasts they had had the power to do so; but for all their loudly proclaimed friendship, the con-

¹ W. Stewart, *J. Keir Hardie*, p. 73.

² *Ibid.*

dition of the workers remained like that of the sick woman who had consulted 'many physicians, and spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.'

The attack that we made on the political dominance of the Liberal and Tory parties was both continuous and effective. Frederic Harrison had assured us that 'the working class is the only class which is not a class. It is the nation,' and we aroused a sense of injustice by repeatedly reminding the workers that although ninety per cent of the population belonged to the working classes, they were denied representation in the councils of the nation, while every other class was represented far beyond its needs. We asserted that the House of Commons, to its disadvantage, was infested with lawyers; the landlords, the mine-owners, the ship-owners, the mill-owners, the railway directors, the bankers, and representatives of the army and navy, were there in abundance. But the workers, who in mill and mine, in field and workshop, created the wealth of the nation, were without representation, and could only obtain it on terms which would place them under the political control of those who exploited them.

This method of advocacy, judged by the calmer temper of our own day, when Labour has won and justified its right to parliamentary representation, may appear to be merely hysterical and perhaps also unfair; but it should not be assumed that our propaganda lacked more defensible qualities. In economic analysis and research it quite easily surpassed the average intellectual quality of the Liberal and Tory platforms, and it had in addition an undeniable spiritual passion. The Sunday meetings of the I.L.P., held in a thousand halls, suggested religious revival meetings rather than political demonstrations. The fervour of the great audiences that assembled in centres like Glasgow, Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, Birmingham, and Bristol, was quite without precedent in British political history. Men who had grown old in years had their youthful enthusiasms renewed under the glow and warmth of a new spiritual fellowship. They were born again: they joyfully walked many miles to listen to a favourite speaker; they sang Labour hymns; and they gave to the new social faith an intensity of devotion which lifted it far above the older political organizations of the day.

The women members of the movement were self-sacrificing beyond all experience. They organized bazaars, and conducted sales of work and concerts; they provided teas and 'do's' of all kinds, and they have an honourable place in the records of the

Labour cause. The children also played their part; they distributed leaflets, sold pamphlets and journals, and performed other duties with exemplary zeal. The early Socialist propaganda was of course political, but it had a quality of ecstasy which few churches, and no other political party, could arouse.

No purely selfish movement could have aroused and sustained an enthusiasm of the kind which then existed. The men and women who were its members and workers were not moved by envy of those who were richer than themselves; they were in the grip of a new and compelling faith. It appealed to the emotional side of their natures and they became, in imagination, citizens of a new and better world. The ideal of a co-operative commonwealth, the possibility of creating a social environment in which men would live 'with the light of knowledge in their eyes,' released in them hidden stores of moral energy, and the Labour-Socialist propaganda did more than any other force operating at that time to promote a living belief in a 'more excellent way' of life, and to transform many thousands of the so-called 'economic man' into self-denying crusaders of a new faith.

My personal experiences as a propagandist were much like those of other Socialist speakers. I had to undertake much night travelling, to sleep in many strange beds, to speak at noisy street corners, and in many stuffy halls. There were, in addition, local problems of organization and personal equation to be faced and solved. It was a hard and often thankless task; but I retain pleasant recollections of many happy associations, of rare privileges as a guest of workmen in their own homes, of fireside gossip respecting memories and personalities, of merriment over our mistakes, and, above all, of the happy fellowship of many strenuous years.

The labour of propaganda was, on rare occasions, suspended for recreation and human fellowship; and prominent among these opportunities were the annual gatherings of the Clarion Fellowship, which arose out of a desire on the part of the Birmingham Clarion Cycle Club to meet Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Thompson, and the rest of the *Clarion* staff. 'The Clarion Fellowship was a real right thing. We made many genuine friendships, and kept them. Such an experience could not have been bought or earned. It was a gift of the gods.'¹ The Clarion Annual Meets were both useful and refreshing, and they were looked forward to with eagerness

¹ Robert Blatchford, *My Eighty Years*.

by hundreds of tired and loyal workers. I remember best of all the one that was held at the little town of Ashbourne in Derbyshire, when Mr. Blatchford and many well-known figures in the movement were present. Ashbourne itself was outraged and interested, but in particular avaricious. The inn-keepers showed their hostility to the politics of their visitors by 'bills of such a price, no guest could ever bear them twice.' The quality of the inns was typically English, which meant that it left much to be desired. One of them, in which the late Mr. F. E. Green and myself were quartered, supplied adequate reasons for our sacrificing the rent which we had paid in advance, and searching for more satisfactory shelter. I was present when some difference arose between the executive committee of the Fellowship and the proprietor of the hotel where they were staying, concerning excessive charges, and when the dispute had gone on for some time, Mr. E. F. Fay ('The Bounder') rose to the full height of his immense stature, and in dramatic tones said: 'Give me the money that I may pay this honest man.' Fay handed the money over, got his receipt of payment, and then with the simulated dignity of a tragedian, he turned to the greedy proprietor and said: 'Sir, this is the Ashbourne to which no sensible traveller returns,' and we, at least, never did.

Keir Hardie was the leading personality in the I.L.P. during its earliest years, and his name 'will stand for ever as the Moses who led the children of labour in this country out of bondage.'¹ This is not the place for a balanced estimate of Hardie's work and personality, but no one can doubt that his influence over the working classes was great and wholesome, or that because of his faith, his rare courage in loneliness, and his incorruptible will, he was one of the prophets of the new order. I knew him well, both as advocate and as legislator, and if his political leadership influenced me less than it did many of my associates, I nevertheless believed that he was in the line of those great souls who, in various ways, had wrought for the glory of the people's cause. But I never had a blind reliance upon the wisdom of his judgments. He was a sincere man with a one-track mind, and the conscious simplicity of his dress and habits helped to deepen his influence. He looked like a patriarch, and for many years before his death in his sixtieth year, he encouraged the description of himself as 'the grand old man of Labour.' He was rugged in appearance, sturdy in build,

¹ W. Stewart, *ƒ Keir Hardie*: Preface by J. Ramsay MacDonald.

with a wayward crop of hair, a grizzled and bushy beard, and he had a finely-shaped head. Hardie's oratory was simple and effective. There were few purple patches in his speeches, and nothing that his audiences could not understand. He often chided me for my scepticism in religious matters, but was himself far from orthodox. His contribution to the Labour movement was not that of the creative thinker; it was the example of an unshakable resolve and of an unclouded faith in the character of the common people. Hardie was the master of his own soul; he loved the people to whom he belonged, and I revere his name because he was faithful to them.

The story of Hardie's election as the member for West Ham in 1892, and of his working-class escort to Parliament on the day that he took his seat, has often been told with the desire to throw discredit upon him. His cloth cap gave offence to those who thought more of the hat than the head, but it was his habitual covering, and I should have respected him less if he had sought to disguise himself under any other. He was not too kindly received in Parliament, and he had the settled conviction that Gladstone refused to meet him. Hardie's own account of the incident which led to this belief is worth recording. 'On one occasion, going through the division lobby, with Mr. W. S. Caine, we came upon Mr. Gladstone in conversation, I think with Mr. Mundella, standing near the fireplace. Caine left me for a minute and said something in an undertone to the old man, who vigorously shook his head in a very decided fashion. Caine returned, and we continued our walk towards the wicket. He did not say what had transpired and, of course, I made no inquiries, but it remains a conviction with me that he had asked permission to introduce me to him, and that Mr. Gladstone had declined. I honoured him for it. I was more than sick at the time of the attempts which had been made, from various quarters, to rope me in, and it came as a relief to find that the man who had the most at stake would not appear to descend to such tactics as some of his pretended followers had made their nightly practice.'¹

If this interpretation of the incident is thought to have been a mistake on Hardie's part, the habitual discourtesy of some of the less charitable among the Liberals and Tories towards Labour men should be remembered. The feeling against Mr. Joseph Arch, for example, was considerable, because he had supported

¹ Quoted by A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, p. 141.

Home Rule for Ireland. 'The Tories expected a victory, and when the counting was over, the chagrin of the High Sheriff was so great that he refused to announce the figures, and the duty had to be performed by the Under Sheriff. Mr. Arch shook hands with the High Sheriff, and the latter deliberately took out his handkerchief and wiped the hand that had grasped the Labour man's.'¹ Reports of discourtesies of this kind to men who were the trusted representatives of the workers, always made their followers fantastically savage, and they greatly embittered the tone of our advocacy. Many of us had, ourselves, been the recipients of similar discourtesies from self-righteous politicians of the baser kind, and we were always prepared to believe and to resent the stories of personal affronts to our leaders.

I am quite sure, however, that Mr. Arch received no discourtesy from his opponent in the contest. When Lord Henry Bentinck contested South Nottingham at a later date, I opposed him chiefly because he had tried to deprive the agricultural labourers of England of their one representative, and, many years afterwards, when we were colleagues and friends in the House of Commons, I told him that I had worked my hardest to prevent him from being elected. But he was as fine a gentleman as ever lived, and he would have hated that any personal disrespect should have been shown to his opponent. Lord Henry was a Tory of the old school, who felt a sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of the working classes, and the contrast between his courtly politeness and sympathetic insight and the often ill-disguised offensiveness of the die-hard school in the House of Commons was constantly before us, and the Labour members were greatly distressed at the news of his death.

The Socialist propaganda, which we sustained at high pressure during this time, made more converts among the organized workers than among the general public, because the need for a change of trade-union method had become daily more obvious. In 1897 and 1898 the engineers and the Welsh miners had fought desperate 'strike and starve' battles, and were compelled to submit with nothing gained, while the courts of law had taken from the unions the security which generations of struggle had won. Picketing had been curtailed, and the freedom of the unions from collective responsibility had been ended. The Taff Vale decision caused grief and consternation in the ranks of the unions; but it was

¹ 'Ibid,' p. 127.

received with whoops of joy by the employers' organizations, and by their representatives in Parliament, who believed that they had, at last, got the unions powerless at their feet. Practically the whole of the newspaper Press conducted a joyful campaign against 'trade-union tyranny,' and they provided their readers with moving stories of persecuted workers, whose lives had been made miserable by the callous coercion of parasitic trade-union leaders, and whose daily prayer was that they might be placed under the benevolent and fatherly care of their employers, whose one aim in life was to deprive themselves of profits in order that their liberated workmen might have higher wages!

There is little, if any, exaggeration in this description of those times. I was for several years constantly staying in commercial hotels in many parts of the country, and it is literally true to say that in that environment I never heard one word of sympathy with the worker, or found the slightest understanding either of the principles of trade unionism, or of its proposals. The Taff Vale decision proved in the end to be a blessing rather than a burden, for it convinced the trade-union rank and file that the old 'strike and starve' method of industrial betterment must be associated with the new method of organized political action.

The first step in the direction of a trade-union political policy was taken at the Trade Union Congress which was held at Plymouth in 1899. A resolution was drafted by the I.L.P. and, as Socialist societies had, at the instance of Mr. Burns, been excluded from the congress, it was adopted by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, whose representative, Mr. James Holmes, had been the organizer of the Taff Vale strike. It was moved by Mr. Holmes, and seconded by Mr. Sexton, in the following terms: 'That this congress, having regard to the decisions of former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the co-operation of all the Co-operative, Socialistic, Trade Union, and other working-class organizations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above-named organizations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for securing an increased number of Labour members to the next Parliament.'

This resolution was opposed with all the force that the 'old gang' could muster. Mr. Thomas Ashton of the Oldham Cotton

Spinners, who spoke against it on their behalf, declared that 'if this proposition is passed not one trade unionist in 10,000 would take any notice of it. Therefore, why should congress waste time over it? If our society was to interfere in politics it would go down immediately, but by keeping clear of politics it would become a strong organization.' Mr. Ashton's judgment was, on this occasion, seriously warped and futile, yet he had every right to believe that it was well based. Previous congresses had passed similar resolutions, and trade unionists had not taken any 'notice' of them. His judgment was, however, wrong on this occasion, because he himself had failed to take notice of the change which Socialist propaganda and the Taff Vale decision had effected in the minds of his followers. The resolution was carried by 546 votes to 434. The first definite step towards the creation of a politically independent Labour Party had been taken.

In this connection it is interesting to note that although Mr. Ashton had prophesied that 'our society . . . would go down immediately' if it engaged in political activities, he was himself, four years later, a candidate for a seat in Parliament under Labour Party auspices. This change of attitude was in no way discreditable to Mr. Ashton—quite the contrary. It was his duty as a responsible leader to warn the congress against accepting a policy which he sincerely distrusted; but when a decision had been taken, it was no less his duty to stand by the union which, for many years, he had served with loyalty and distinction. We youngsters believed that 'Tom Ashton' was indeed old-fashioned; but we knew that he was loyal and sincere.

In order to ensure the practical application of the resolution a special committee was appointed to prepare a draft constitution for the proposed organization. It included members of the Parliamentary Committee, viz. Sam Woods (Liberal), W. C. Steadman, M.P. (Radical), Will Thorne (Social Democrat), and Richard Bell. There were, in addition, two members each from the I.L.P., the S.D.F., and the Fabian Society—viz. Keir Hardie, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Harry Quelch, H. R. Taylor, George Bernard Shaw, and Edward Pease. When this committee had completed its preparatory work it called a general conference which met on the 27th and 28th February 1900, in the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, London, to discuss and adopt the draft of the proposed constitution. One hundred and twenty delegates, representing more than half a million trade unionists, were present,

and, after a long discussion, in which Mr. Burns among others took part, the conference elected a Labour Representation Committee, 'consisting of seven trade unionists, two members of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F., and one of the Fabian Society.'¹

The general election came before the committee had time to get into its stride, and of the fifteen candidatures that it promoted, only those of Keir Hardie and Richard Bell were successful. The work of organization and consolidation nevertheless proceeded without interruption, and the membership rapidly increased. In 1900 only 375,931 trade unionists were affiliated; in 1901 the number had risen to 455,450; in 1902 to 861,000, and in less than thirty-five years a Labour Party was created which, in 1924, became responsible for the government of the greatest imperial nation of the modern world. The Labour Ishmael had indeed multiplied 'exceedingly,' and had become a 'great nation.'

Next in importance to the actual formation of the Labour Representation Committee was the election of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald as its secretary. It was the expressed opinion of the delegates from the S.D.F. that many of the votes cast for him were given under the impression that he was Mr. James Macdonald, an old Labour leader, who at the time was the secretary of the London Trades Council. I was present throughout the sittings of the conference, and I do not think that this belief was well founded. The election of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was in any case a fortunate event. The position required great enthusiasm, infinite patience, tireless industry, driving power and tact, all of which, capably assisted by Mr. J. S. Middleton, Mr. MacDonald possessed and gave. He was widely read, was an experienced writer and speaker, and he was then young enough to ignore both fatigue and disappointment.

I shall in a later chapter give my own estimate of Mr. MacDonald's character and personality, but it is appropriate that I should say at this point that to him, perhaps more than to any other man, the Labour Party in its earlier years owed a debt of gratitude for the guidance and wise planning which made it so great a power in the State.

¹ M. Beer, *A History of British Socialism*, vol. ii, pp. 319-20.

CHAPTER XI

THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT: SWITZERLAND AND ITALY

What need I of book or priest,
Or sibyl from the mummied East,
When every star is Bethlehem star?

R. W. EMERSON.

I DESIRE at this point to remind the reader that, although political and Labour questions arrested my attention, and made constant demands on my time and energies, my deepest and most abiding interests were in religion and ethics, and to these great subjects the best thought and work of my life have been given. Quite early in my career as a Socialist advocate I saw, as few of my colleagues appeared to see, that the problem of human betterment involved spiritual as well as political and economic development, and that if Socialism was to carry humanity nearer to the realization of the perfect life, it would need to be based upon the sure foundation of a greatly improved individual character. This to me was the centre of a mental gravity to which, in the end, all my thoughts returned. It was to me the Law and the Prophets and, indeed, the whole philosophy of my life.

The churches at that time appeared to be as remote from the world's needs as the stars, and the orthodox were so active in denouncing unbelievers that they neglected to say their prayers. They related the religious life to heavenly bliss instead of to earthly duties, and they diverted to the ecstatic contemplation of a problematical future life, precious spiritual energy which should have been used to enrich and sweeten the world in which they lived. The clergy, with some notable exceptions, described the felicities of heaven, and ignored the claims of the earth. Their kingdom was not of this world.

The Socialist, on the other hand, too readily assumed that man would attain to a state of blessed perfection through the practical operation of the magic formula of the 'public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.' First abolish capitalism and all other blessings would come.

I could never have been satisfied with a philosophy of that kind,

and I consequently sought to associate with my own political and social teaching the importance of character building and personal responsibility. My association with the National Secular Society ended about the year 1895, not because of any fundamental change of opinion, but because its leadership was then individualist in character, and, although the society never sought to restrict the liberty of those who, like myself, were Socialist in outlook, a divided loyalty seemed to me to be inadvisable, and I quietly retired from its service.

The Rationalist Press Association is another effective propagandist organization with which I have been closely associated since it was founded in 1899. The declared aim of the organization is to spread knowledge, to proclaim the dignity and the essential quality of reason, to eradicate superstition, to stimulate freedom of thought and inquiry in reference to religious beliefs and practices, and to extend the bounds of rational liberty. Its work consists mainly in the publication of books on scientific and religious questions, and during the past thirty-five years it has published and circulated millions of copies of cheap reprints of the books of great thinkers on the problems of science, religion, and philosophy, as well as hundreds of thousands of copies of new books on these subjects.

Among the honorary associates of the association, past and present, are distinguished names, such as Sir Arthur Keith, Julian Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, Eden Phillpotts, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein; and among the dead Lord Morley, Arnold Bennett, Georges Clemenceau, Ernst Haeckel, and Sir E. Ray Lankester.

Mr. Charles A. Watts, the chief founder and inspirer of the association; whose friendship I have enjoyed throughout my adult life, may look with justifiable pride on what it has already accomplished, and rejoice as he watches the child of his mind grow from strength to strength. I considered it a great honour to be invited to serve as its president.

My official association with the British and American Ethical movement is now of long standing. Early in the nineties I joined a group of local students and social workers, who met in Grinling's rooms on Woolwich Common, for the study of ethical problems. Our first textbook was Professor J. H. Muirhead's *The Elements of Ethics*, followed by Mazzini's *The Duty of Man*, and other suitable works, and, whenever I could escape from personal lecturing

engagements, I listened to addresses on ethical questions, given at the South Place Ethical Society in Finsbury, by Dr. Moncure Conway and his successor, Dr. Stanton Coit, who had been associated with the late Dr. Felix Adler and the Society for Ethical Culture, in New York. I also attended the Sunday morning lectures, given under the auspices of the newly-formed West London Ethical Society, at the Princes Hall in Piccadilly, and in the summer of 1898 I met Dr. Coit at the house of my friend, Mr. Sydney Gimson of Leicester, when I discussed with him the principles on which the Ethical Societies were founded and, as as he was then endeavouring to establish additional societies in London and the provinces, he asked me to accept a salary of £150 a year for three years as a lecturer and organizer in the Ethical movement. The proposal was entirely congenial to me, and I therefore arranged to terminate, as soon as convenient, my work as Hutchinson Trust lecturer to the Fabian Society; but before I had completed the courses of lectures upon which I was then engaged, my health gave way, and they had suddenly to be abandoned.

There then began for me a depressing and prolonged period of nervous exhaustion and insomnia, from which I never entirely recovered. I did, however, after months of comparative helplessness, slowly regain sufficient nervous strength for moderate, but not excessive, labour; and I owed this improvement in health to the care and generously-given time of my friend, the late Dr. Gustav Edholm; and to him and his able assistant, Mr. Kinnell, I was indebted, for the most part, for the recovery of my working powers. The physical treatment of disease was far less respected thirty years ago than it is to-day; but thousands of patients who have experienced the benefits of the Swedish Kellgren method in the expert hands of Dr. Edholm, Dr. Swanberg, and others who have practised it, will be glad to know that worthy successors will carry on their work.

As a temporary respite from committees and public meetings I went to France, where I stayed for about two months with friends at Neuilly-sur-Seine, one of the most attractive suburbs of Paris. I was too nervously strained to read or write, but I visited the galleries and museums, and I observed at close quarters many aspects of French life. Owing to the famous Fashoda incident which had occurred a short time previously, the political relationships existing between England and France were at that time very

strained. I saw the tumultuous welcome given to Colonel Marchand at the Gare de l'Est on his return to Paris, and I at once realized how keen was the resentment of the French people against the action taken by the British Government. The English as a race were assailed and caricatured with characteristic Latin vigour, but the traditional courtesy of the French people towards the individual Englishman visiting their beautiful city was never broken. I took the occasion several times to test this. There was at the time a popular boulevard song, the chorus of which ran:

Voilà les Anglais,
Avec le menton rasé,
Comme un garçon de café,
Oh, yes: plum pudding, goddam.

The boys and young men of Paris habitually sang these lines when they saw an English victim approaching; but whenever I stopped them to ask the way to a more or less fictitious destination, they invariably took off their caps and, with the greatest courtesy, displayed a polite anxiety to help the unfortunate Englishman 'avec le menton rasé.'

When I became officially connected with the Ethical movement it was not a case of *faute de mieux*; its philosophy and outlook exactly met my needs. In the first place it approached the study of religion and religions from the standpoint of reason; it was constructive as well as critical in its thought and method; it included in its reach social and economic questions; it required no formal confession of faith; and it gave to those who served it complete freedom of conscience. It was non-dogmatic in its teaching, catholic in its sympathies, democratic in its outlook and in its machinery; it gave to me the peace that I had long sought, and for thirty-eight years I have served it with both pride and gratitude.

This is not the place for an elaborate explanation of the aims and principles of the Ethical movement, but a short description of its philosophy is perhaps required. First, a word in regard to its origin and development in England.

In its modern form it is an importation from America where, in 1876, the first Ethical Culture Society was founded by Dr. Adler in New York; but when its first representative arrived to form similar societies in England, he found that the ground had long been prepared for the sower. This approach had been made by many small groups of religious thinkers, but perhaps most conspicuously by the South Place Religious Society, which was

founded in 1793, and whose members were drawn together from various churches whose doctrines they had outgrown. This society became famous under the leadership of William Johnson Fox, who became its minister in 1824, and under whose teaching it developed towards a purely human conception of religion and morality. Fox was a courageous man, and he attracted to him men of courage. The failure of the great French Revolution had been a serious disappointment, and British reformers lamented the loss of leaders who, like Coleridge and Wordsworth, had accommodated their minds to the reactionary aftermath. Fox was the first among them to revive the old hopes, and successfully to plead for a renewed trust in man. He was not of the type of religious reformer who asks only freedom for his own sect; he demanded it for all men; and when the old deist, Richard Carlile, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in 1819 for publishing Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, he led a protest against it. Fox was then regarded as a firm believer, as is shown by a letter written to him in 1827, by Sarah Flower, the author of the famous hymn, *Nearer, My God, to Thee*. How few of those who, even in our own day, sing this most appealing of all Christian hymns know that it was written by one whose heart was bleeding because out of the whole Christian scheme only belief in an 'all-wise and omnipotent Being' remained!

The South Place Chapel was visited by many whose names have passed into history as among the great figures of their time. Among those who 'sat under' Fox were Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Peter Alfred Taylor, Harriet and James Martineau, Thomas Campbell, Leigh Hunt, Macready the actor, Helen Faucit, Robert Browning, and Ebenezer Elliott. It was on one of his visits to the South Place Chapel that Longfellow first heard his *Psalm of Life* sung as a congregational hymn.

After the death of Fox the congregation was much weakened, and that it did not break up was due to its great good fortune in discovering a new leader and teacher in Dr. Conway, whose scholarship, broad sympathy, and sweetness of character enabled him to rebuild the society, and to carry further the work that had been done. Dr. Conway was of old Virginian and Maryland stock, and his friends among the leading personalities of American life included Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Agassiz, and Theodore Parker. He probably did more than any other man of his time to promote good feeling between England

and America, and there are many still living who, like myself, came under the influence of his stimulating teaching and personality.

When Dr. Coit succeeded Dr. Conway at South Place the name of the organization was changed to that of the South Place Ethical Society. Dr. Coit aimed to reproduce in England societies on the American model, with such modifications as were required by the circumstances and traditions of the older nation. He had a propagandist zeal and a passion for conversion that seemed almost fierce when compared with the quiet and comfortable leadership of Dr. Conway, and under his compelling enthusiasm, some thirty Ethical societies were started in England and, for a time, they attracted considerable attention.

The London Ethical Society was founded in 1886, chiefly by Oxford men, who had been greatly influenced by Thomas Hill Green, and who, like him, believed that morals, or the theory of morals, was inevitably bound up with religion as a theory of the universe and of man's place in it. Professor Muirhead acted as its honorary secretary, Professor Bernard Bosanquet was the chairman of its committee, of which Professor James Bonar and Mr. Percival Chubb were members, and among those associated with it were Professor Edward Caird, Sir John Seeley, Professor W. Wallace, and Dr. Adler.

What attracted me to the Ethical movement was its proposal to establish in the world a religion of devotion to the ideal of righteousness without supernatural sanctions. It surveyed the religious creeds which divided men into sects and churches, and it offered to the world the moral qualities accepted by all of them as the sufficient basis of a common religious endeavour. The various Christian sects had subordinated moral values to doctrinal beliefs, and they had insisted that, apart from such beliefs, there could be no safely based morality. The Ethical societies on the other hand affirmed a religion of morality without theology. They insisted that the 'good life' merited complete devotion because of its own inherent worth. They did not assert that Christianity and great religions, such as Hinduism and Muhammadanism, were indifferent to the beauty and importance of the moral life. The criticism of the Ethical movement was that these great faiths regarded morality as having no right to man's devotion on its own account, and that by subordinating it to theological belief they had both retarded its growth and obscured its beauty. The Ethical movement was not fundamentally hostile to the churches, nor was



From Marcu Beza's 'Land of Many Religions'

A PROCESSION FROM THE HOLY SEPULCHRE (p. 241)

it unmindful of their past service. Everything of abiding value to mankind that they had taught, it accepted and reaffirmed. It took from every religion the one principle—the principle of the good life—that was common to them all and, separating it from the theological creeds that had placed it in an inferior position, placed it on high, and offered it as the basis of a universal religious movement.

The Christian churches, however, made claims that the Ethical movement could not concede. They claimed finality for the Christian doctrine. Growth was possible only within the limits of the Christian system. Its proposals were the perfect and final revelation of the divine purpose. The Ethical movement, on the other hand, believed in growth from age to age. It accepted no one teacher as comprehending all the moral possibilities of man—neither Jesus, Muhammad, nor the Buddha—but it exalted to the supreme place in man's regard the spirit of goodness of which these great teachers were the witnesses.

The Ethical movement also made a strong appeal to me on other grounds. Ancient society, I reasoned, had been held together by the unifying force of two powerful institutions—the monarchy and the Church—the first of which was being superseded, while the latter was being increasingly ignored. I was impressed by the thought that in the days when church-going was a universal habit the whole of the population of the country submitted itself to a regular, even if unsatisfactory, moral discipline; whereas at the time to which I am referring, it is doubtful whether more than ten per cent of the population attended religious observances of any kind. It appeared to me, therefore, that modern civilization might be living upon and exhausting its moral inheritance, and that new centres of moral inspiration were urgently required, especially for those whose association with the churches had been broken on intellectual grounds.

I believed, too, that the proper function of the churches was not necessarily the defence of an outmoded theology, but the organization of the human conscience for effective and more beneficent action, and that in order to achieve this end, not fewer, but more churches were required. But such churches would need to base their teaching on man's growing experience, and search for and accept inspiration wherever it might be found; their teaching should aim to satisfy the intellect, console the heart, and prepare mankind to face the trials of life with a larger sympathy and a

higher courage, and it seemed to me that no amount of mint, aniseed, and cummin, and no altar ornaments, however costly, would excuse the absence from them of fine resolve and helpful social endeavour. As I then looked at the problems of the world the great human families were split asunder to the danger and hurt of them all, possibly because they had laid upon themselves the curse of disintegrating creeds and doctrines. Muhammadanism and Christianity appeared to be no nearer union than when the first missionary was sent to Arabia; and we still continue to regard Buddhism as a heathen superstition. What a sorry picture it all makes! We see a world at one with us in desire. Men of all races are feeling as we feel, aspiring as we aspire, responding to the same fundamental emotions as ourselves; they want peace as we want it; they love the qualities of mercy, truth, and justice as we love them; we are pilgrims together on the same highway of life, capable of helping and sustaining each other in faith, doubt, and vicissitude; yet we are dangerously separated by entirely futile and unnecessary dogmatic barriers.

These passionate separations appeared to me to have had unfortunate reactions upon human relationships, and I thought that history had not failed to show their effects upon a nation's life. Rome was powerful; but she fell because she lacked the guiding principle that was equally applicable to all her provinces. Each of her possessions had its own doctrinal forms, and each despised the religion of its neighbour, with the inevitable result that when the hour of trial came, each was for its shibboleth, and none was for the State.

And I thought that the British Empire, similarly divided, might perhaps share the same ignoble fate. For there is no emotional union between its separate parts. The United Kingdom is a religious bedlam; Scotland is Calvinist, England fundamentally Lutheran, Ireland is split in two by an implacable religious hatred. All of the churches agree that Christ was sent to save sinners; but not for an hour can they agree as to how that fact shall be told to the children in the nation's schools.

The indifference of the great majority of the population to religious worship is beyond dispute. Yet a large proportion of these unchurched men and women are kindly, generous, truth-loving people, whose main desire is to 'play the game'; and the excellence of their character, their readiness to sacrifice themselves for any cause that arouses their interest, and their qualities as

citizens, bear comparison with those of their creed-observing neighbours. These decent-minded men and women, who profess no creed, would appear to be the spiritual descendants of that young Jotham who 'was twenty and five years old when he began to reign . . . and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord . . . howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord.'¹ They wish to do what they consider right in their business dealings, and as parents they are increasingly aware of the moral responsibilities involved in the handing on of life to the coming generations.

I cannot describe the relief with which, after many explorations, renunciations, and disappointments, I became associated with this sane and satisfying endeavour to establish new centres of spiritual energy, and I have spent many entirely happy years in the obscure yet enriching service of the Ethical movement. It takes its stand upon the everlasting verities, for although 'opinions alter, manners change, creeds arise and fall; the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity.'

It was decided that I should spend the summer of 1900 in Switzerland, in the hope that the mountain air might help to restore my nervous strength, and perhaps relieve the prolonged insomnia from which I had suffered. I accordingly went to Zinal in the Val d'Anniviers, off the Rhône Valley, and I made the ascent on foot from Sierre. Rain fell while I was on my way, and when I arrived at my destination I was wet to the skin and so hopelessly tired that 'old Marie' at the hotel imposed her motherly tyranny upon me, scolded me furiously, and, much to my embarrassment, promptly undressed me and put me to bed. Peace to her memory.

For several weeks I rested in the sun on the veranda of the hotel, taking such exercise as my strength permitted. I benefited greatly from my stay there, for the clean mountain air was like champagne, and was worth a shilling a pint of anybody's money. My advice to those who have not already experienced the healing silence and the solemn beauty of the mountains, is to keep away from Switzerland, unless they are ready to surrender themselves for ever to its spell. Resist as you will, the mighty summits call you back to them, and you cannot stay away. My own appetite for the jewelled beauty of Switzerland has increased with the years, and with a redoubled eagerness I still 'lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my strength.'

¹ 2 Chronicles xxvii 1-2.

I was never able to undertake what the experienced mountaineer would call 'climbs.' When I had the physical strength necessary for Mont Blanc, or other reasonably difficult efforts, I had not sufficient money to pay for guides and porters; and when, later, it might have been possible for me to provide a modest sum for these essential companions; I no longer had the vitality required for the experience; but at Zinal; Kandersteg, Wengen, Finhaut, Grindelwald, Engelberg, Zermatt, and other places, my feet have stood upon heights from which I have seen the glory of the world.

The climbing of mountains is much like the severe discipline of living. With a satisfying sense of things accomplished, you approach what looks like the goal of your endeavour which, when it is reached, proves to be not the end, but only a stage on the way. With weary feet you continue to meet again and again with the same experience. Each point of achievement reveals itself as a finger-post pointing to more difficult heights. But when at last, aching and breathless, you stand alone on the roof of the world, the conquest made and with nothing between your tired body and the infinite blue, you look out upon the earth and feel that life is good. I know of no time in the world when human pride and vanity seem more unworthy than in the moments when, alone, a man looks out upon the silent glory of the hills.

I suppose that I should be ashamed to confess that on more than one occasion I have been moved to tears by the majestic beauty of the mountains, because 'strong' men assert that to give way to such emotions betokens an irrational weakness of character. Well, the strong men may think and say what they like. Such experiences are not for them.

Thirty years ago we used to hear a story bearing on this human reaction to a sudden revelation of natural beauty. It was said that Leslie Stephen and an Anglican bishop of well-established piety approached on foot the summit of the Gemmi Pass from the Kandersteg side, where the range of the mountains of the Valais from Mont Blanc to Monte Rosa is hidden from view until a corner is turned within a few yards of the Hotel Wildstrubel, when the startling beauty of the fifty miles of snow-capped peaks, glistening like jewels in the sky, immediately strikes the eye. There is none of the slow and beautiful unfolding of the mountain scenes that climbers know and love so well; the full glory of the picture is revealed in a moment, and the human response to the shock is instantaneous and unpremeditated. Both of these distinguished

Englishmen—so the story went—stood for a moment in dumb amazement, until Leslie Stephen, who had just written *An Agnostic's Apology*, shouted the words 'Glory Hallelujah,' while the orthodox bishop exclaimed: 'Well, I'm damned!'

While I was staying at Zinal Dr. Adler, the founder of the Ethical movement in America, arrived in Switzerland, and on my way home I called upon him at the Giesbach Hotel on Lake Brienz. He then explained to me how he had come to establish the first Ethical Society and why, after his studies at Heidelberg and Berlin, he had felt himself unable to succeed his father, who was a respected Rabbi in New York City. The story of Dr. Adler's spiritual struggle is told in his best-known work, *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, and need not be repeated here, but as I too had gone through the same valley of doubt and renunciation, I understood quite clearly all that the journey had involved. Dr. Adler immediately impressed me as a man of great mental capacity and of rare moral insight. I am not sure that I know what is meant when a man is described as being 'great'; but judged by his life's work, by his contributions to the theory of education, by his scholarship, and by his far-reaching spiritual influence, Dr. Adler was, I believe, that. Small in stature, with a voice lacking both power and beauty, he exercised a beneficent sway over three generations of American men and women by the arresting quality of his thought, and by his intense moral fervour. A seer, rather than a prophet, he nevertheless pointed the way to a new religious life.

I left Dr. Adler feeling somewhat depressed and unhappy. His description of what an Ethical Society leader and advocate should be, seemed definitely to place that position beyond my reach. Such a leader should have received a severe academic training; he should be a close thinker, an eloquent speaker; and he should possess a personal character such as few men own. The emphasis which Dr. Adler laid upon the need for a systematic academic training greatly troubled me, and I think that I should have given up any intention I may have had of seeking a career in the Ethical movement that he had founded, had not inner forces compelled me to continue. And I remember that at the time I consoled myself with the thought that some of those whose teaching and example had most influenced mankind—Jesus, Isaiah, and others—had never received the approving mark of Oxford or Berlin. I had the privilege of Dr. Adler's friendship for thirty-three years, and I believe that, while he would have preferred that I should have

received an approved scholastic education, he was, in the end, not too much distressed at its absence.

The conversation that I had with him at our first interview was, however, the real reason why soon afterwards I went to Germany. My health was far from re-established, and my working powers remained greatly impaired. Dr. Coit, therefore insisted, against my own desire, that I should give myself a 'sabbatical year,' away from the constant drive of committees and lectures. My knowledge of the German language was then, as now, very inadequate; but it was decided that I should go to one of the German universities, where I could hear lectures on the subjects that interested me, and early in 1902 I went to the famous university of Heidelberg, where I remained for the spring and summer terms. Had I been in better health I should probably have chosen the University of Berlin, but Heidelberg offered more restful conditions, in addition to courses of study that specially fitted my needs. I attended lectures on the contents and history of the New Testament, on economics, on philosophy, and on Roman Law. The lectures from which I derived the most profit and satisfaction were those in the philosophical school, given by Professor Kuno Fischer. This interesting scholar had a well-established European reputation, and he was the only professor of the university who in any way influenced me. His knowledge of the subjects upon which he spoke was adequate, and his renown as a teacher was helped by his eccentric personality. When he entered the crowded hall where his lectures were given, he always carried in his hand the key of his room, and kept this in view as he spoke, in order to indicate, as his students believed, that he alone possessed the key to knowledge and wisdom. He invariably began his lecture before he had actually reached the platform, and he appeared to be as satisfied with himself as any man I have ever known. At an earlier period of his career he had been granted the title of 'Excellenz' by the King of Saxony, and the sound of the word was as music in his ears, a weakness in which he was generously indulged by his pupils. One of his foibles was that outside Germany no real scholarship existed, and it was said that while undergoing his *viva* a sharp-witted English student, in reply to the statement that German scholarship was the best in the world, had remarked with a satisfactory emphasis: 'Ja, Excellenz, die Deutschen wissen alles'—a sign of wisdom which was so pleasing to the old man that the boy got his Ph.D. degree without more ado.

Professor Jellineck's lectures on Roman Law angered me to a surprising degree. They were given while the Boer War was in progress, and he frequently imported into them political judgments against England, for the mere pleasure of arousing the nationalist passions of his students, who shouted their approval whenever the master killed the English with his mouth. He assured them that young Germans were more nearly gods than men; and as this was obviously also their own opinion, they were boisterously delighted. It was in Professor Jellineck's lecture room that my eyes were opened to the growing danger of German nationalism. I was myself opposed to the Boer War, and with others I had been chased from Trafalgar Square by the newspaper-produced patriots of London, who then believed that the whole duty of man was to 'pull Kruger's whiskers'; but the German professor's ill-founded stories about the 'cruelty of England's soldiers' nearly turned me into a 'patriot.'

For the German students I acquired only a moderate respect. Many of them were charming personally, and I regretted that I did not know them better. But I liked very much the people of Heidelberg, and of the whole of the south of Germany. I do not know what will be the judgment of history respecting the responsibility for the war which devastated Europe twelve years later; but I am satisfied that the blame will not fall upon them.

During the summer vacation of 1902 I went to Grindelwald, in Switzerland, where, in the garden of the Hotel Schöneegg, I struggled for six weeks with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and other erudite philosophical works. I decided at the end that I did not understand them, but I greatly respected my own diligence. In order to obtain exercise and time for meditation, I enjoyed walking towards the Upper Glacier and chatting with an old peasant who was regarded as a local half-wit. His calling was to collect alms from pedestrians, for the service of blowing through a large horn, which produced four or five separate and well-defined echoes from the mountains. He was himself something of a philosopher, although he had almost certainly never read Kant or Schopenhauer, for when he was asked by a friend of mine why he did not work in the fields like his neighbours, he replied: 'Ach, nein, es ist schöner zu blasen.' There was also some genial chaff between myself and a corpulent German schoolmaster, who spent day after day of his vacation sitting outside one of the Grindelwald cafés, drinking unbelievable quantities of lager beer. When I asked him why he

did not do some climbing in order to reduce his weight, he replied: 'Nein, mein Junge, my philosophy of life is that God intended man to see die Bergen von unten, die Kirchen von aussen, und die Wirtschaften von innen.'

Among the British visitors to Grindelwald there were not lacking those who loved to make a parade of their piety before the foreigner. On one occasion I heard two Scotch ministers loudly refuse, on behalf of the party of excursionists they were leading, to pay the usual small entertainment tax, because the hotel orchestra had sacrilegiously played in the lounge on the 'sabbath day,' thereby disturbing their enjoyment of 'a quiet Christian holiday'!

It had been arranged that the last three months of my 'sabbatical year' should be spent in Italy, where I hoped to continue my study of the Italian language, work at the history of several of the ancient City States, visit the galleries and the great Italian cities. Consequently, early in September, I took a night train from Munich for Venice, where I arrived the following afternoon. I was in a third-class compartment, and my Austrian fellow-travellers were most friendly and helpful. As soon as they entered they invariably introduced themselves by asking: 'Wie weit fahren Sie?' They were not really interested in my destination, but they wanted to talk and offer whatever help they could to one who was so obviously a foreigner. I never met more likeable and kindly people.

When I arrived in Venice the mosquitoes were even more friendly and attentive than were the Austrian workmen. They welcomed me with an embarrassing eagerness, as though they had long awaited my arrival. I had never been received anywhere with such sustained enthusiasm. There were untold thousands of them, and all of them were attending diligently to their gruesome business. I cursed the day on which they had been born.

Venice had not so great a hold upon my imagination as Florence and Rome, but I enjoyed my first days there in full measure. I explored her watery streets, visited St. Mark's, the Lido, and the galleries, designedly reserving my visit to the Doge's Palace until the following Sunday, which would be a free day. Never was the virtue of thrift so poorly rewarded; for when Sunday came I had been removed from my lodgings on the Schiavoni to the Ospedale Civile with an attack of enteritis, contracted, I fear, through contaminated water. My Italian was very limited, but the doctor knew some German, and that had to serve. Medical science in Italy has, I believe, a deservedly high reputation, and the doctor

who attended to me was efficient; but the hospital itself had little to commend it, and I could not say that, judged by English standards, it was clean. I was visited in the 'Protestant' ward by the English chaplain resident in Venice, who had heard of me while at the hospital on a visit to an injured sailor boy. I asked him to be good enough to excuse me from receiving further visits from him, as I did not wish him to come under the impression that I was an orthodox believer. He was, however, a great sport, and said at once that he did not wish to talk religion to me, and he never did. He got cheques cashed for me and, had I been a smoker, he would assuredly have smuggled cigarettes into the hospital for my use. I wrote to thank him afterwards for his help, and I am sorry that I did not keep in touch with him. He was a kind and friendly soul, to whom I was much indebted. One disturbing thing connected with the hospital was that the local Salvation Army held what seemed to be noisy services in the ward. These self-sacrificing people desired to console and help, but their religious exercises were the reverse of comforting to patients who needed above all things quietness and rest. As soon as I was fit to travel I made my way by slow stages, back to London. It was grievously disappointing not to see Rome and Florence, but my illness had exhausted my available supply of money, and I could not continue. As soon as I was able to do so I resumed my work as a lecturer and organizer in the Ethical movement.

My time, during the next summer, was spent in Switzerland, where I was the temporary resident secretary of the Co-operative Holidays Association. My duties were to receive and be responsible for successive parties of excursionists, and to give to each group one or more lectures on the constitution and social life of Switzerland. The position was an unpaid one, but the work was congenial and interesting. The centre for that year was at Kandersteg, where we were well received at the Hotel Kurhaus by the proprietor, Herr Reichen, and his sisters. The railway to Kandersteg had not then been built, and each party completed the journey, beyond Frutigen, on foot.

For the protection of the members of the parties, the association had adopted certain necessary rules, which I had to insist upon being observed. This sometimes led to moments of strain, especially when school teachers were involved. They had been accustomed to issue orders, but not to obey them. One of the rules was that on lonely mountain walks, where accidents might

occur, or a sudden fog make conditions somewhat dangerous, the members of the party should keep together, and in touch with the experienced guide, who was provided for their safety. Ordinarily this rule was cheerfully obeyed, except by the teachers, who considered that rules were made only for children. When disputes on this matter reached an acute stage I had sometimes to offer to one or more of these haughty and unbending instructors of youth the choice of obedience or their return ticket. Some of the women teachers, to whom Switzerland was a new experience, were quite certain that, whereas ordinary people might require stout nailed boots for mountain climbing they could walk with safety in light high-heeled shoes. The fact that, if on the journey they sprained an ankle, the male members of the party would have to carry them back to the hotel, gave them not the least concern, and the 'boot-parades,' which I insisted upon before starting upon excursions, were for the first day or two distinctly unpopular. After a little experience, however, they would sometimes admit that such precautions were perhaps necessary—for other people.

My own experience led me to believe that the victims of mountain disasters are usually those who think themselves above the need for rules. What might well have resulted in the loss of a life was an adventure I once had on the Mer de Glace at Chamonix. It was a foggy day, and my party were crossing the glacier, a quite safe proceeding so long as they kept to the pathway and obeyed the guide. The young people were singing English folk-songs as they walked, and there was a good deal of noise and happy laughter; but in one of the lulls I caught a distant sound which I at first thought had come from one of my young bloods, who had disobeyed and got lost. We secured immediate silence, and in answer to a call from the guide we got a reply from someone who was obviously in distress. A rescue party was formed, and in due course there appeared through the fog a very frightened Austrian excursionist who, in thin shoes and with an umbrella in the place of an alpenstock, had wandered off the pathway and become hopelessly lost. It was late in the afternoon, and had I not heard his cry, he would almost certainly have been frozen to death.

It happened that during our second season at Kandersteg the last party of the season, due to arrive on the first day of September, was cancelled, and I found myself faced with three weeks of unexpected leisure. The International Freethought Conference was to meet at Rome in the middle of the month and, being near

to the Italian frontier, I determined to make a second attempt to visit Florence and the Eternal City. Therefore, as soon as I had seen my charges put into the train for England, I set out to cross the St. Gotthard into Italy. My first stop was at Milan, where I visited the cathedral, and saw Leonardo da Vinci's famous picture, 'The Last Supper,' and early in the morning of the second day I arrived in Florence, where I was fortunate enough to meet two young Americans who were also on their first visit to Italy. One of them had just taken his medical degree, and the other was studying painting in a Paris studio. They were vivacious and attractive companions, and together we visited the galleries and the historical places of that very beautiful city.

My love for America is second only to that for my own country, although I have never felt that Americans have made exhausting efforts to acquire the charm of modesty; but whenever that virtue appears in them, it is very winning. After days of hard work in the Uffizi and other galleries, our very self-assured and talkative young painter became a blameless model of subdued appreciation, and said: 'Gee, in America I call myself an artist; but here, well, I guess I am just nothing.' I never saw a man more willingly or so completely surrender himself to the glory of past achievement, and I felt sure that his subsequent work would be enriched by his newly born humility. I knew comparatively little about art, but I was fairly well acquainted with Florentine history, with the main incidents in the lives of the Medici, Dante, and Savonarola, and to our mutual benefit we pooled our knowledge and experience. I insisted that my young companions should visit Savonarola's cell in the convent of San Marco and, because I wished it, they also, as an act of faith, did homage to the memory of the great spirit who, three hundred years earlier, had dwelt therein, and whose life had been sacrificed at the stake.

Only twice in my life have I been overcome by a sense of awe on approaching a great city. One of these occasions was when the train slowly emerged from the hills, and I caught my first glimpse of the walls of Jerusalem. Then, through my own emotions, I realized something of the ecstasy felt by countless pilgrims and crusaders as from the summit of Mizpah they first saw the walls of the Holy City. I, too, almost cried aloud: 'My feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.' The other occasion was as the train ran beside the River Tiber on its way to Rome.

I attended the meetings of the Freethought Congress, where I

had the privilege of meeting Haeckel, Sergi, and many other celebrated men whose work I had greatly admired, and the members of the conference laid a wreath of remembrance at the foot of the statue of Giordano Bruno, which stands in the Campo dei Fiori on the spot where he was burned to death for heresy.

The authorities of the Vatican made a quite exaggerated bother about this, and chose to regard the ceremony as an offensive demonstration against the Church; though why they should have done so was not clear, unless they still believed that heretics should be burned at the stake. They ungraciously closed the galleries of the Vatican during the sittings of the conference, lest its members should defile them by their visits, thereby showing great discourtesy to many distinguished visitors to the Italian capital.

When the conference was over I rejoined my American friends, and together we did the sights of Rome. Among the things that deeply impressed us was the light of the moon on the ruins of the ancient Coliseum:

Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old.¹

The churches, with the exception of St. Peter's, were to me very disappointing, partly, I think, because they had been spoiled by cheap and tawdry ornamentation. The Vatican galleries provided, of course, a priceless experience, but I was not in the least degree impressed by the religious side of the Eternal City. If I wanted to dissuade any friend of mine from joining the Catholic Church I think that I should try to induce him to visit Rome; but I know that Roman Catholicism both draws and satisfies many of the best men and women in the world, and I never meet in the streets of London the gracious sisters, who with sweet charity do its philanthropic work, without having for them a feeling of very deep respect.

My young companions affected not to be interested in religious questions, and on more than one occasion they attempted to shock me by what I took to be an American students' song, of which I remember only these lines:

You must be a lover of the Lord, or you won't go to heaven when you die;
You must be a lover of your landlady's daughter, or you won't get a second
piece of pie.

¹ Byron.

They were healthy, fine-grained young men, and when they left I greatly missed their genial chatter and saucy comments on everything they saw and heard. On my way back to England I called at Genoa, chiefly that I might visit the tomb of Mazzini in the city where he was born and buried and, after placing a few flowers upon it, I returned to London, to resume my work in the Ethical movement.

CHAPTER XII

SECULAR EDUCATION: W. T. STEAD: WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Howiver, I am not denying that the women are foolish; God Almighty made 'em to match the men.—MRS. POYSER in *Adam Bede*.

THE Union of Ethical Societies, very early in its career, began to suffer from the affliction, common to every religious organization from the time of St. Paul to our own day, of inability to raise sufficient funds adequately to carry on its work, with the result that my engagement as its secretary was reduced to the basis of a half-time payment. Other sources of income had therefore to be found and, when the ill-fated daily newspaper, the *Tribune*, was started, I accepted a post as an assistant in its political information department in Bouverie Street. 'The Rendezvous,' as this department was called, was one of the widely advertised attractions of the enterprise, and it represented a new feature in British newspaper work. A large and beautifully furnished room on the ground floor was allotted to the work of the department, which was under the charge of the late Mr. H. S. Perris. The intention of the proprietor, Mr. F. Thomasson, and the editor, the late Mr. William Hill, was that it should deal with the requests for information on political and social questions which newspapers are accustomed to receive, and in addition provide an attractive centre where London readers of the *Tribune* might consult encyclopedias, and other sources of information on social and political matters. The place was much frequented from the hour that it was opened, and its staff work had to be conducted under adverse conditions. The paper had no organized political library, no prepared 'morgue' of biographical details. Yet the information applied for had to be supplied promptly and accurately.

The work was very interesting, but the pressure was continuous throughout the many hours that the department was open. From morning to night the time of the small staff was commandeered by cranks, who insisted upon being told precisely when, and why, John Bright had said 'Perish India,' or what Mr. Gladstone had said on some mostly-forgotten question a generation earlier. The place was also besieged by thrifty paragraph-sellers who seized upon the

opportunity presented of getting their data without personal research. Well-fed people demanded facts and arguments against the current proposal to feed necessitous school children, which they proposed to use in speeches following ample dinners; others asked for material with which the demand of the unemployed for 'work or maintenance' could be successfully opposed, and one delicate-minded inquirer invited me to supply him with such details concerning Keir Hardie's private life as could be used to lessen his influence among the working classes. It was not a comfortable experience. I had never before adequately realized the miserable position of thousands of men who, in pulpits and professions, were 'in hell being tormented,' in the pursuit of their daily bread; but I knew that, with no wife or children dependent upon me, I enjoyed a freedom that was denied to them and, after a few weeks' trial, I asked permission to retire. Mr. Thomasson was a generous and broad-minded man, and had I placed my difficulties of conscience before him, he would have understood why I boggled at assisting people with material which was to be used for purposes which he, as an individualist, would have disliked quite as much as did the Socialist he had employed.

In the first decade of the present century the controversy respecting the teaching of religion in State-aided schools was renewed with all its traditional bitterness, and the old Nonconformist plan of complete State neutrality towards religious teaching in such schools was reaffirmed. The Tory Government of 1902 had destroyed the machinery by which the progress of the previous thirty years had been achieved, and it had altogether ignored the important question of tests for teachers.

Mr. Augustine Birrell, in the year 1906, made one more attempt to settle the dispute, but when the Bill that he had induced the House of Commons to accept, reached the House of Lords, amendments were inserted which reduced it to a sectarian measure, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman withdrew the Bill, 'because the general effect of the Lords' amendments was to alter completely its character as it left the House of Commons, and to contradict the principles on which it was framed.' The failure of this well-meant attempt at conciliation created a feeling of despair in the minds of educational reformers, and there arose an instant demand for a renewal of the policy of a secular education which had received the support of two generations of Nonconformist preachers, among them being the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, the Rev. Dr. Dale of

Birmingham, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker of the City Temple.

The Union of Ethical Societies took the initiative in February 1907 in calling an open conference to consider what should be done. The late Sir George Greenwood, M.P., presided, and a resolution was passed which created the Secular Education League—of which I became the secretary. The league did not concern itself with the kind of religion which was taught in the nation's schools; it asserted that the proper attitude for the State to adopt towards the teaching of religion, about which the citizens of the nation were hopelessly divided, was one of strict neutrality. It insisted that the teaching of religion was not the responsibility of the State, but that such responsibility belonged to the parents and to the churches and organizations specially concerned with religious teaching. This solution of the problem had been adopted by Mr. Gladstone, who never concealed his dislike of 'the popular imposture of undenominational instruction,' and who believed that 'simply secular teaching' was 'impartial and not, if fairly worked, in any degree unfriendly to religion.' Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had also stated that 'there are only two ways of settling this question. One is that the State should pay for no religious teaching, and the other is that the State should pay for all religious teaching,' and he strongly supported the principle of the secular solution, while Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had stated that in his opinion nine-tenths of the Liberals were ready to support it.

Among those who agreed to serve on the executive committee or the general council of the Secular Education League were: Thomas Burt, M.P., Arthur Henderson, M.P., J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., Philip Snowden, M.P., J. M. Robertson, the Hon. John Collier, Edward Clodd, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Havelock Ellis, Frederic Harrison, George Meredith, J. A. Hobson, the Right Rev. Bishop Mitchinson, Eden Phillpotts, Graham Wallas, Lord Weardale, H. G. Wells, and Israel Zangwill. Several hundred clergy and ministers either enrolled themselves as members of the league, or assisted its work in other ways, and I was responsible for its executive and propaganda work from the day that it was founded until I became a member of the Government in 1931.¹

In addition to my work as secretary to the Union of Ethical Societies and the Secular Education League, I devoted a good deal

¹ See my *Case for Secular Education*.

of time to Socialist propaganda in connection with the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party, and I served for a year on the National Administrative Council of the latter body. I was also deeply interested in the work of the Co-operative movement, for which I also did considerable educational work. I became a member of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society when I went to live in Woolwich in the year 1890, and my name is still on its membership roll. When I first knew it, the activities of the society were restricted to the borough boundaries, and its membership was comparatively small. It is a great satisfaction to me to have taken a small part in its work, and to have seen it extend its beneficent influence over an area which at present begins with Erith in Kent and ends at Malden in Surrey.

There was at one time a proposal that I should become the secretary of the International Co-operative Alliance, whose head office was, and still remains, in London. The Co-operative movement on the continent of Europe was then rapidly extending, and a secretary was required who was informed as to Co-operative principles and practice, and who could speak the French and German languages. It was thought that I might successfully fill the position, and I was persuaded by the late Mr. Aneurin Williams, M.P., who was the chief British representative of the alliance, to submit my name for approval. The salary offered was more than twice as much as I had ever received, and the work itself greatly interested me. There were on the short list two other applicants for the post, one of them an Austrian and the other an Italian, but as neither of them had all the required qualifications, my appointment was considered almost certain. With this end in view I went to Ostend to interview the members of the International Committee, prior to a meeting on the following day of delegates of the societies, at which the actual appointment would be made. The members of the committee were very friendly, and everything went well until several of the British delegates raised the question of my Labour activities, and then everything went badly.

My political opinions were well known to most of the British representatives, inasmuch as I had frequently written and spoken in favour of an alliance between the Labour and Co-operative movements. This policy was, of course, anathema to the old Liberal Co-operators, who sought to impose silence upon me on Labour and Socialist matters, as a condition of my appointment. The tone in which this requirement was made was such that had I

been required to decide at that moment, I should have done so with a firmness equal to the demand. But apart from the fact that the position offered regular employment and the attraction of a comfortable income, I greatly desired to undertake a task which was both important and agreeable, and I did not wish to leap to a decision which might be the result of a perhaps temporary resentment.

I reflected carefully upon the whole matter throughout a sleepless night, and after breakfast the next morning I informed the president of the alliance, Sir William Maxwell, that I was no longer a candidate for the position. It is probable that had I simply refused to give the undertaking asked for, the continental delegates, who had wider views, might still have appointed me, but I knew that in England, where my work would have to be done, and where most of the members of the executive committee lived, I should be subjected to a continuous and unfriendly scrutiny. Moreover, I had never in my life consented to pawn my conscience for the sake of reward, and I did not propose to do so even for the Co-operative movement. Sir William Maxwell was very understanding and sympathetic, and I know that he approved of my decision. The result of my withdrawal was that no appointment was then made, but when later my old friend, Henry May, also a supporter of Labour, became the secretary of the alliance, no attempt was made to impose upon him the conditions that I had rejected.

From the beginning of the century to the time of his death I saw a good deal of Mr. W. T. Stead, the famous editor of the *Review of Reviews*. Mrs. Stead sometimes attended the meetings of the South London Ethical Society, at which I spoke, and I was a frequent visitor to their house in Smith Square, Westminster, and to their cottage on Hayling Island. I was greatly attached to them both, and London did not seem the same place to me after the tragedy of the ill-fated *Titanic*. I had followed with interest Stead's work from the time when, in 1885, he had published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* the startling articles on *The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon*.

These articles immediately set the country ablaze from end to end. England was stripped naked and shamed before the world and she did not like it. Such things might happen on the 'wicked Continent,' but that any one should say that such infamies occurred in Pimlico, under the very shadow of the home of 'our dear Queen,' was an indefensible and wanton outrage. Patriots and brothel-

keepers gave a united shout of angry protest, and the accusation that girl children could be bought from their parents in London and sold to rich men for seduction was stoutly denied by an offended and injured public—until Stead proved it by facts which were conclusive. And then there was a savage cry of resentment against the man who had exposed the loathsome traffic. Everybody was moved to wrath on one side or the other, and the 'music halls,' ever ready to collect malodorous profits, inflamed the tempers of their patrons with patriotic guff, accompanied with as much lubricity as could safely be introduced into rhyme and gesture.

Stead was the creator in England of the new journalism, but he was not a profit-hungry sensationalist. He had written the articles at the request of men and women of national repute, in order to secure a much desired reform in the law. In the year 1884 Lord Shaftesbury had succeeded in getting through the House of Lords a Bill increasing the age of consent, which was then thirteen. When it reached the House of Commons the Bill was 'talked out, counted out, and finally destroyed,' and the same fate awaited the similar Bill of the following year. Mrs. Josephine Butler and Mr. Benjamin Scott, the City Remembrancer, who was also the chairman of the London Committee for the Prevention of Traffic in English Girls, appealed to Stead for help. He was informed by a friend in the Government that there was 'not the slightest chance' of the Government agreeing to take the matter up, whereupon he determined to compel them to do so. He was further informed by the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, that female children of thirteen years of age were frequently purchased for seduction. 'Do you mean to tell me,' said Stead, 'that in very truth actual violation in the legal sense of the word is constantly being perpetrated in London, on unwilling virgins, purveyed and procured to rich men at so much a head by brothel-keepers?' 'Certainly,' replied the chief of the department, 'there is not a doubt of it.' 'Why,' exclaimed Stead, 'the very thought is enough to raise hell.' 'It is true,' said the officer, 'and although it ought to raise hell, it does not even rouse the neighbours.'¹ Thereupon Stead set himself to arouse the nation. 'Be the results what they may,' he wrote, 'no nobler work could a man ever be privileged to take. Even a humble part in it is enough to make one grateful for the privilege of life.'

¹ W. T. Stead, *The Maiden Tribute*.

It was necessary to the end in view that the sale of a child should be clearly established and, with the knowledge and the approval of Dr. Temple (the Bishop of London), the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Archdeacon (later Dean) Farrar, Mrs. Josephine Butler, and General William Booth of the Salvation Army, arrangements were made for the 'purchase' of a child, who when handed over was at once placed under the protection of reliable people. When the facts of the case were established public indignation compelled the Government hurriedly to pass the Bill for which, a few weeks earlier, there was 'not the slightest chance.'

But in order to prove his case, Stead had laid himself open to a charge of having taken a child away from her home without her father's consent. The actual 'purchase' had been from the mother, and legally she did not count. Stead was arrested, tried, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment as an ordinary criminal. His friends were greatly distressed, but he remained radiantly happy and, later, when he had been transferred to the first-class division, he sent Christmas cards to them on which he wrote: 'God, even my God, hath anointed me with the oil of gladness above my fellows.'

Stead frequently talked to me about this great crisis in his life, which undoubtedly gave him more satisfaction than any other episode in his varied career. Every year on the anniversary of his sentence, he wore prison dress, and he always teasingly insisted that I should never become a satisfactory reformer until I too had been in prison; it seemed to pacify him, however, when I attributed my continued freedom to luck rather than to virtue. Through my acquaintance with him I met many interesting people. I remember especially a very interesting discussion, which took place at his house one Sunday afternoon, when Mr. Jerome K. Jerome explained the philosophy of his famous play, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. Among those who spoke on that occasion was Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who had so impressively played the part of its chief character. Jerome, it appeared, had written the play to expound the theory that if human beings are trusted, and put on their honour, they will seldom break their word. Forbes-Robertson supported this belief with illustrations from his own experience as an actor in many lands. During one of his tours in America he needed for a part in one of his plays a particular actor; but managers, agents, and colleagues strongly advised against him. 'He is a hopeless drunkard,' they said, 'and he has

broken faith with every one who has employed him.' His suitability for the part was, however, beyond question, and so Forbes-Robertson sent for him. When the man appeared he was not sober, his health had been injured through indulgence, and he presented a depressing picture of failure and misery. 'Everybody has warned me against you,' said Forbes-Robertson, 'and I am taking a great risk. I believe that you are the greatest man in the world for this part, and I am going to put you on your honour. If you will promise me that you will do your best not to betray my trust in you, you shall have the part.' After a few moments of emotion the poor fellow, with a reawakened pride and strength said: 'By God, governor, I promise, and I will keep my word.' 'He was completely loyal to his undertaking, and he was a great success,' said Forbes-Robertson, and when Stead asked what became of him he answered in the deep note of his wonderfully beautiful voice: 'Dead, and owing to the bursting of a dyke the cemetery in which he was buried was washed away.'

I saw a good deal of Stead in connection with the peace movement, with which we were both connected. He was, however, a big-navy man, and his campaign in favour of 'two keels to one' comforted the Navy League as much as it depressed his friends. He was one of the bravest, most tolerant, and most provokingly self-willed men that I have ever known. He was an excellent talker, a bad listener, and a lovable and most loyal friend. His apparently unrelated and half-contradictory judgments and activities often perplexed his admirers, and enabled his critics to say with some plausibility that he stood for one thing to-day, for another thing to-morrow, and for everything at random. But there was a unity in his life which was not always apparent.

Stead was a moral, rather than a political, thinker, and in his moral judgments there was an unbroken consistency. Tolerant of the opinions of others, he was always ready to assert his own. His belief in spiritualism appeared to me to have no basis in either knowledge or experience. When considering so-called spiritualist phenomena he was as confiding as a child, and he was frequently the prey of his associates. Nevertheless, his beliefs helped to sustain him in great emergencies, and I recall that on our way back from Brookwood cemetery, after the funeral of his eldest son, he said to me: 'It is a great thing to know that I shall have him daily at my side as usual'; and when I said: 'It is in any case a great

thing to be able to believe that you will,' he replied: 'I did not say "*I believe*"; I said "*I know*."'

I was at his house a few days before he sailed for America on the *Titanic*, and as I left he put his arm around my shoulder, a thing he had never previously done, as though in his mind was the feeling that it was 'Hail and farewell.' We have imperfect knowledge of what happened on that grim night of the 15th April 1912, when the great ship went to her doom, but I have often thought of the disaster in words written by the hand of its most distinguished victim: 'We constantly felt ourselves to be in the position of spectators, who watch a shipwreck with straining eyes, making such endeavour as they can to snatch here and there one stray swimmer from a watery grave. A rope is thrown into the abyss; it falls a yard short, and the last chance is gone. The waters close over the strong swimmer in his agony, and no second opportunity is afforded.'¹

After his death Mrs. Stead was good enough to propose that I should go through the accumulated mass of his papers, with a view to the preparation of his biography, but I was not sure enough of my working strength to justify me in risking her money, and in addition I feared that my inability to sympathize with Stead's spiritualist outlook might prevent me from giving a picture of him such as both my affection for him and his own work demanded.

During this period I took part in the agitation for the enfranchisement of women, not because I thought they would vote for the principles in which I believed, but solely because I could see no justification for withholding the vote from them. There were many arguments against giving votes to women, but there were no convincing reasons. I was never a believer in the chivalrous fiction that women were the special guardians of moral treasure for mankind, nor did I think that it was their so-called ennobling influence which preserved the gains of civilization. On the contrary, I believed that of the two sexes man was the more conservative, and that the emotional nature of woman frequently led her into adventures from which the average man would shrink.

I therefore approached the question of votes for women solely from the standpoint of citizenship, and I had no more doubt that women had the right to vote for the laws they were expected to obey than I had that whenever they had the opportunity to do so, the majority of them would vote against the reforms that I had

¹ W. T. Stead, *The Maiden Tribute*.

spent my life in trying to secure. In such matters as housing, temperance, child welfare, etc., they would have a valuable and refreshing influence; but I feared that questions such as secular education, disestablishment of the Church, and the abolition or reform of the House of Lords, would receive from them an immediate and decisive setback. I further expected to see them hocused and stampeded at elections more easily than men, and the experience of the general elections of 1931 and 1935 suggests that my fears were not entirely baseless.

The baseless assertion of Mr. Runciman, that poor people's savings in the Post Office Savings Bank were being hazarded to pay 'the dole,' was in 1931 sufficient to send women in terrified crowds to the polls to vote against the Labour Party. Carefully manufactured political bogies of this kind will no doubt be forthcoming at future elections, and with the same intention. On the next occasion it may be suggested that the Church, the Throne, or the Family is in danger, or that the wicked Socialists intend to take children from their mothers for compulsory upbringing in State barracks. The political liar will always prove himself adequate to his occasions.

I felt this danger very keenly, and my support of the agitation for women's enfranchisement was based solely on my conviction that women as citizens had rights equal with those of men. The suffrage movement aroused much resentment among both men and women, many of whom thought that its leaders had forgotten that they were 'ladies.' I was, however, convinced that without a departure from the traditional 'ladylike' methods, the Liberal and Tory parties would never take effective action. There had been in the House of Commons a non-party majority for the suffrage ever since the year 1870, but the question had been treated as a joke. The private member made facile promises, and broke them promptly and without remorse. The leaders of the Liberal Party were resolutely opposed, and it was their shabby treatment of the 'ladylike' movement led by Mrs. Fawcett and others, that caused the formation in 1903 of the Women's Social and Political Union.

To this organization and the Women's Freedom League the women of the present generation owe their votes. These unpromising organizations determined to do for the franchise question what the I.L.P. had done for the Labour movement—rescue it from the faithless caresses of the Liberal Party. Mrs. Emmeline

Pankhurst, who, with her daughter Christabel, was the founder and leader of the W.S.P.U., had learned the technique of the business in the I.L.P. itself, and she was exactly the type of leader required for the work in hand. She was magnetic, courageous, audacious, and resolute. But in the firmament in which she chose to shine, there could be only one luminary. Walpole had called Mary Wollstonecraft 'a hyena in petticoats.' Mrs. Pankhurst was an autocrat masquerading as a democrat. Mussolini might with profit have learned his business at her feet. She later found her appropriate spiritual home, and ended her days in the Tory Party, which used her to oppose Labour candidates and others whose help she had accepted, and on whose shoulders she had climbed to fame.

Among the chief opponents of the suffrage movement were thousands of women who affected to believe that 'women's place is the home,' and some of these 'ladies' advocated their cause with a coarseness of expression which few men could have adopted. 'One of the more active of these female anti-suffrage orators had written and published as follows: "For social purposes, now and always, man is superior to woman. Organized society rests on him. It would go on quite comfortably if every woman returned to her wigwam and did nothing but breed,"' and a woman like Mrs. Humphry Ward 'was so constituted as to be able to believe that women were fundamentally incapable of taking a useful part in politics, but that she herself was an exception to the rule.'¹

It was necessary to be in constant contact with the suffrage movement during those exciting years to be able to measure the strength both of its passion and its perversity. The women were brave beyond all challenge, devoted and self-sacrificing beyond all precedent, and wilful beyond belief. It became with them almost a point of principle not to accept advice from a man. They developed a kind of anti-male hysteria, and young women, fortified with the knowledge that 'the brute' would not retaliate, publicly slapped the faces of unoffending men. Stewards who had to remove riotous suffragettes from public meetings were openly accused of handling them indecently. I could never understand why men were supposed to be specially responsible for the backward political position of women, in view of the attitude of Mrs. Humphry Ward, and the hundreds of thousands of women who agreed with her; but their faces were never slapped. I remember

¹ Mrs. Fawcett, *What I Remember*, p. 123.

being at one meeting of the W.S.P.U. at which, within an hour, one young unmarried woman asserted that husbands selfishly forced undesired children on their wives; and another, also unmarried, insisted that men were so mean that on the first day of their marriage they informed their maternally-minded wives that there must be no children. Poor man, during the suffrage agitation, had a mean time.

But the suffrage movement had an entirely different and better side. I had the privilege of knowing most of its leading figures, and scores of those who cheerfully went to prison for their cause; and for the beauty of their character and example, for their joyful subordination of self to the cause they had at heart, for their willingness to serve and suffer for the emancipation of their sex, I had a respectful and whole-hearted admiration. They won a great victory, and they handed on to millions of their fellow countrywomen a proud and heavy responsibility.

CHAPTER XIII

CANDIDATURES AND PROPAGANDA

Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from chance, have conquered fate.
MATTHEW ARNOLD.

IN the course of my work as a propagandist I had frequently visited the town of Huddersfield, where my addresses had been well received. This was partly due to the fact that I often avoided speaking on purely 'capital *v.* labour' and 'class war' subjects, and tried to interpret the Labour and Socialist movements in the light of scientific knowledge, historical research, literature, and poetry. The earlier agitation in favour of Socialism had, of necessity, placed a disproportionate emphasis upon one or two leading principles, which it was necessary to commend by the frequent use of dramatic and easily remembered slogans. Socialist advocates had on every occasion to explain not only what Socialism was, but also what it was not. They had to insist that it was not communism, not anarchism, not nihilism, not syndicalism; that it had nothing to do with religion on the one hand, nor with scepticism on the other; that there was no 'Christian Socialism' or 'Rationalist Socialism,' just as there was no Christian chemistry or rationalist arithmetic. It was continuously necessary to assert and to reassert that Socialism had no necessary connection with the problem of marriage and divorce; with vegetarianism, anti-vaccination, birth control, or faith-healing; that it was restricted to the definite business of securing the State control of industry, and to the regulation of specific economic enterprises such as banking, mining, currency, markets, shipping, landownership, and transport. Socialist advocates found it necessary to deal with this aspect of their propaganda in every speech that they made, just as they had to make it clear to those who regarded their own limited and special reforms as adequate to social salvation, that unless they were willing to let their personal panaceas take their appropriate place in the Socialist scheme, they should not join the Socialist movement. For the

most part these uncompromising zealots took us at our word, and we went on our way without them.

Again, the main proposals of Socialism had to be made crystal clear in meaning, and enforced by means of carefully selected and easily remembered phrases. This of necessity involved endless repetition, which in the end became merely tedious. We talked interminably about 'production for use and not for profit,' about 'nationalization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange,' and when in due time these declarations became somewhat stale, any attempt to advocate Socialism on wider lines was generally welcomed.

It was perhaps because my lectures did something to meet the mental needs of the satiated Socialist audiences that they were appreciated by the stalwarts of the Huddersfield Labour Party. I had no thought of any official connection with the town, and I had then no conscious desire to enter upon a parliamentary career. I most certainly never said a word which would indicate that I wished to do so, and I was therefore surprised when I received from the local Labour Party organization an invitation to become their candidate at the next parliamentary election. I was also pardonably gratified, for I was not what could be called a 'good candidate.' I had no money nor trade union backing, and my unorthodox views on religious doctrines would not be welcomed by the local religious communions. I placed these difficulties before the local council of the party with complete frankness, and they with an immediate unanimity laughed at my fears. 'Never you mind about the money side of it,' they said, 'we will look after that; and as for the rest, we want a Socialist, not a trade union candidate, and the chapels would vote solidly against you even if you were a lifelong orthodox lay preacher.' I have never ceased to be grateful to those fine and gritty Yorkshire weavers, for their courageous faith in one who, as a candidate, possessed so many disadvantages.

As a constituency Huddersfield had certain well-known drawbacks from the Labour standpoint; the Liberal Party machine was one of the strongest in the country, whereas the Labour Party organization was, by comparison, contemptible, and the wind of local prejudice blew continuously against it. The handful of people of social standing in the borough, whose sympathies were on the side of Labour, withheld their support owing to their dislike of the youthful and harmless exuberances of Mr. Victor Grayson,

who had just been elected as member for the neighbouring Colne Valley constituency. Plentiful were the excuses given for the default of people of this type, whose support had been both promised and expected. 'One had married a wife, another had bought a cow, and all said they could not come.'

The fact that I never expected to win the seat did not in the least depress me. At that time we believed that a candidature for parliamentary honours afforded the best of all opportunities for effective propaganda, and I fought all the more gaily because I knew that there was little chance of success. I was a candidate for the borough for at least twelve years, during which I contested three elections, and I thoroughly enjoyed every hour of the time and the labour that they involved.

At the very beginning I made an arrangement with the local Labour Party which was observed until my official connection with it terminated. I undertook to keep my platform advocacy both courteous and efficient; and I left the practical business connected with the candidature entirely in their hands. Thus, when an election was imminent and a responsible agent had been appointed, I placed myself, like any other voluntary worker, at his disposal. It was, however, understood that I should never personally canvass for a vote, and I never did. My attitude was that if people did not feel able to support the principles which I represented, I did not want their votes on personal grounds.

From the time that I became the official candidate for the Huddersfield Labour Party I gave considerable time to the local propaganda, and I addressed crowded audiences, in the Victoria Hall, on at least one Sunday in each month during the twelve years that I was connected with the town. I retain the kindest memories of the hundreds of faithful friends I made among those whose complete loyalty and devotion to the Labour cause was to me a perpetual inspiration. A finer, more joyous and fervent body of men and women I shall never live to see; their smiling encouragement in the hours of defeat is among my most precious memories; but although I endeavoured to keep the work connected with my candidature on a high and quite impersonal level I cannot recall that from any other section of the town I ever received the smallest courtesy.

The life even of a Labour propagandist has its bright moments, and incidents occur which enable him to smile at many disappointments. Like Cassius I always had 'a lean and hungry look,' and

once in the early years of my candidature, when visiting one of the outlying parts of Huddersfield, a motherly woman of ample girth, standing at her door, called out to me as I passed: 'Eh lad, but tha wants some pudding.' I also remember with perpetual delight an incident at my first adoption meeting, which was held in the town hall. Alfred Shaw, the chairman of the Trades and Labour Council, was a man who was greatly respected, both as a citizen and as a colleague. In appearance he was what a well-developed West Riding middle-aged man is expected to be—sturdily built, broad of beam, and with a Yorkshire accent upon which one could safely have hung an overcoat. He had, in addition, a humanity that was broader even than his body, and all his friends and colleagues were proud of his sterling character and quality. He was the chairman of the meeting, and in presenting me to the audience for their approval, he said: 'Now lads, we've got a raight good candidate, an' if t'other parties will behave as gentlemen we shall have a straight clean fight, but if they go in for personalities and vulgarity, we've got a candidate as can lick 'em.'

There were two general elections in the year 1910, one in January and one in December, and at both of them I stood for election on an unqualified Socialist programme. We had no daily newspaper to aid our cause, no motor cars, and practically no help from outside the borough. The strain upon the candidate under such circumstances is considerable, and I was thankful when the eve-of-the-poll meetings were over and my work was done. My personal relations with the candidates of the Liberal and Tory parties were always good, for except at the opening meetings when I requested that every courtesy should be shown to them, I never mentioned their names throughout the campaign.

I have never known poor people give more generously towards the expenses of a candidature than the working-class men and women of Huddersfield. They thoroughly understood that they had themselves to meet the expenses of the elections, and I remember that at the two meetings held on the Sunday preceding the election of December 1910 over £41 was collected from purely working-class people.

During these election contests I learned how easily enthusiastic supporters allowed themselves to be misled respecting the prospects of their candidate. In the December election of 1910 dozens of my helpers were convinced that I had won, and after the poll had closed, one of the ablest of them said to me: 'If tha'rt not in, I'll

go and stand on my head i' Crossland Moor'; and I had to reply: 'Well, Joe, you must get ready to do it, for we have not won.' There were some grounds for the optimism of my friends. In weight of argument and strength of appeal we had left our opponents lagging hopelessly behind; but the hidden sources of help upon which the two rich candidates could rely were not allowed for. Neither my agent nor myself was deceived by the crowded meetings and the fierce enthusiasm of the converted. A day or two before the poll the political machines of the other party organizations began to operate; motor cars by the score appeared on the streets; the influence of the religious communions was drawn upon; cricket and football clubs were scoured for support; the recipients of local philanthropy were scientifically mobilized in opposition to the Labour candidate; and on the day of the poll hundreds of indigent old men and women, 'all dressed up' and 'with somewhere to go,' were motored to the poll to vote against the dreadful Socialist who, if elected, would, it was stated, 'destroy the home and nationalize women.'

On the day following one of my contests one of my friends, returning in a train from the Manchester Wool Market, heard a group of Huddersfield merchants discussing the election results. One of them said: 'Tha knows, Harry Snell was t' best man in t' three, by a long way; but we aren't going to have no bloody Socialist member for Huddersfield.' This story pleased me immensely, for it showed that I had been rejected, not on personal grounds, but because I represented principles which they distrusted. I would that all votes were given on the same ground.

The outbreak of war in 1914 caused the next general election, which was then approaching, to be postponed until after the armistice, four years later. The relations between England and Germany had for some years been growing increasingly difficult, and German policy, indicated by the 'shining armour' and 'mailed fist' declarations of the *schauspieler* Kaiser, had aroused the greatest misgivings in the minds of those who had noted the trend of European Nationalist movements. British policy during this period has been revealed in the autobiography of the late Lord Haldane, and I need not deal with it here. It is sufficient to say that, for some years before the war came, there had been a consistent effort on the part of far-seeing British pacifists and statesmen to promote better relations between England and Germany.

I had myself taken a modest part in work of this character. For

several years I represented the Union of Ethical Societies on the National Peace Council, where the problem of Anglo-German relationships was continuously discussed. Early in the year 1912 conditions had become so disquieting that, after adequate consultation with influential public men, and with their approval, the council decided to arrange for the whole problem to be discussed by men of knowledge and influence in both countries. It was therefore agreed that an Anglo-German Understanding Conference should be organized if, after consultation with people who had influence in German public life, such a conference should be considered helpful.

The National Peace Council were generous enough to ask me to undertake the duty of making the preliminary inquiries, and I went to Berlin where I met representatives of the German peace societies, the leading pacifists of the country, and as many business and official people as I could reach. Among those whom I interviewed was Baron von Stumm, the head of the English Department of the German Foreign Office, who, notwithstanding the caution which his responsible position imposed upon him, gave the project his approval. I also saw some of the leading members of the German Reichstag, and I secured the enthusiastic support of Socialist leaders such as Ludwig Franck, one of the earliest and most lamented victims of the war, and Eduard Bernstein, whom I had known in London in the days of his exile. The venerable Professor Geheimrat Wilhelm Foerster of the University of Berlin, his Excellency Dr. von Holleben, a member of the Prussian Senate, and other influential men, while themselves favourable to the proposal to hold such a conference, wished, before committing themselves to the enterprise, to test the response which such a proposal would receive from a public meeting of German citizens. It was, therefore, arranged that I should address a large public meeting at Charlottenburg on the general question of Anglo-German relationships, following which Dr. Ludwig Quidde of Munich, who had come to Berlin to discuss the proposal with me, should make the suggestion of a conference to the audience. The response was immediate and entirely favourable and, having received the assurance they desired, the German pacifists at once began the task of forming a large committee of representative public men to act with a similar body which was being formed in London.

Sir Frank Lascelles, late British Ambassador at Berlin, became

the president of the British, and Graf von Leyden, Kaiserliche Gesandter a. D., München, was appointed to be the president of the German committee. The two secretaries were Oberbürgermeister Lübke of Homburg and myself. The aim of the joint committee was to bring together a number of influential men of both countries for the purpose of a frank discussion of the difficulties of the situation, in the hope that many misapprehensions might thereby be removed, and that friendship between the two nations might be more firmly established. Among the British vice-presidents were his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, his Grace the Duke of Argyll, his Eminence Cardinal Bourne, the Right Hon. Lord Shaw, the Right Hon. Earl Brassey, the Right Hon. Lord Avebury, the Right Hon. Sir Charles Macara, Bt., Sir Ernest Tritton, Bt., the Rev. B. Meyer (the Secretary of the Free Church Council), the Vice-Chancellor of Edinburgh University, the Lord Mayors of London, Bradford, Cardiff, and Norwich, and the Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

The vice-presidents of the German committee included some of the best-known men in German public life, among whom were Durchlaucht Hugo Fürst von Radolin, Fürstliche Gnaden Heinrich Prinz zu Schönaich-Carolath, Dr. von Holleben, Dr. Harnack, Dr. Dryander, Vice-Admiral von Ahlefeld, the Oberbürgermeisters of Munich, Dresden, Stuttgart, Cologne, and Frankfurt.

Months of careful preparation followed, and in August of the same year Sir Frank Lascelles, Mr. A. Gordon Harvey, M.P., Mr. J. W. Weigall, and myself went to Homburg to confer with the members of the German committee, when the respective proposals of the two committees were unified and approved. In England the project was welcomed in high places, and its success depended upon encouragement from similar sources in Germany. There was not, so far as we could learn, any open official disapproval, but somehow the thing got stuck, and as the weeks went by it was felt that the conference was not being encouraged. The disappointment at one time was so keen that the project was nearly abandoned, and I think that it was mainly through the representations that Mr. Carl Heath, the secretary of the National Peace Council, and myself made to Sir Frank Lascelles, that this course was not adopted. Our faith was in the end justified, for before the date of the conference the difficulties, whatever they were, had been overcome. The conference was held, and was not



SOUTH AFRICA, 1924: AT THE HEAD OF HOWICK FALLS, CEDARA

merely a great success, 'and the proceedings throughout characterized by the utmost cordiality,' but 'the committee' were 'glad to know from information subsequently received that the conference was productive of nothing but good results.'¹

The conference met on the last two days of October and the first day of November, the preliminary meetings being held in the Guildhall, by the courtesy of the Lord Mayor, who formally opened the proceedings. The subsequent meetings were held in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, and they attracted considerable attention. Papers on 'Commercial and Economic Competition' were read by Professor Karl Rathgen, Sir Charles Macara, Mr. Tom Garnett, Sir William Mather, Mr. Aneurin Williams, Dr. Ernest J. Schuster, and Dr. T. H. von Böttinger. The second session was devoted to the question of the newspaper Press, when papers were read by Mr. J. A. Spender (the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*), by Professor A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Mr. J. S. R. Phillips (the editor of the *Yorkshire Post*), Mr. St. Loe Strachey (the editor of the *Spectator*), Lord Lamington, and by Dr. G. Gutmann (the London representative of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*).

The problem of the 'Inviolability of Private Property at Sea in Time of War' was dealt with by Professor Eickhoff (the president of the German group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union), Sir John MacDonell, the Rev. Dr. T. J. Lawrence, Lord Avebury, Lord Weardale, Dr. Spiecker, Sir John Brunner, Mr. D. M. Mason, M.P., Mr. Fred Maddison, and Professor Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. A session was devoted to 'Colonial Development and the Removal of Conflicting Interests,' the speakers being Sir Harry Johnston, Professor Arndt, Pastor O. Umfrid, Eduard de Neufville, and Earl Brassey. The last session of the conference dealt with 'The Promotion of Mutual Knowledge of the Two Countries and their Common Tasks in the Development of Culture,' when papers were read by Professor Ernst Sieper, the Bishop of Winchester, Geheimrat Professor Wilhelm Foerster, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Dr. Wendt, Mr. T. Arthur Leonard, and Dr. Böttinger.

In addition to these formal public discussions, members of the German delegation had interviews with highly placed British statesmen, and his Majesty the King honoured them by an invitation to visit Windsor Castle, where they were suitably entertained. They were also offered a luncheon at the Goldsmiths' Hall, by the

¹ *Report of the Proceedings of the Anglo-German Understanding Conference, 1912.*

Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, and, in addition to a dinner at the House of Commons, as the guests of Mr. Gordon Harvey and Colonel Williams, a formal banquet by the English joint committee, and a luncheon given by Mr. Ernest Oldmeadow, they attended receptions at the houses of Earl Brassey and Sir John Brunner. The greatest good will prevailed throughout, many misapprehensions were removed, and the conference ended with a comforting belief that the cause of peace had been served.

During these critical years the British Socialist movement made a special contribution to the cause of peace, by arranging several peace demonstrations in London and in the provinces, to which distinguished speakers from various European countries and from America were invited.

The National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., in the year that I served as one of its members, convened great 'International Peace Demonstrations' at the Albert Hall, London, at Leeds, Bradford, and other places. Our most distinguished visitor on these inspiring occasions was the matchless French orator, Jean Jaurès, whose passionate eloquence aroused the emotions even of those who could not follow the meaning of his words. There were also Émile Vandervelde of Belgium, Molkenbuhr of Germany, and Mills of the United States of America. The British speakers were Keir Hardie and, I think, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Prior to the meeting at the Albert Hall, and during dinner at the old Westminster Palace Hotel, I acted as interpreter between Jaurès and Hardie, neither of whom spoke the other's language. On another occasion we held a similar meeting at the Kingsway Hall, London, where Jaurès and Vandervelde again spoke, and when, in addition, we had the distinguished presence of Anatole France. Mr. Robert Dell generously arranged a little coffee-party after the meeting at the old Vienna Café in Oxford Street, when a few of us had the happy and ever-to-be-remembered privilege of meeting and conversing with the greatest of modern French writers.

At the end of July 1914 I was at Finhaut in Switzerland, in charge of a party of fifty-three excursionists, and it was not until we had been there for a week that rumours of an impending war reached us. We were returning from a climb to the top of the Col de Balme, when we met Swiss soldiers, fully equipped, ascending a narrow pathway in single file to guard the frontier pass. It was then that we heard the news. The world was changed for us in a moment. The glittering beauty of the snow-capped mountains

was instantly forgotten, and our whole thought had to be given to the problem of how we could get home. Early in the morning we had left Finhaut in quiet peace; on our return we found it in a state of panic. All credit had been stopped, and paper money was refused as worthless. Rich English and American visitors could not even secure a meal. The Swiss *hôte* took no risk. Food became difficult to obtain, and every hotel was anxious to get rid of its visitors, lest they should the more quickly produce a state of famine.

The situation immediately became acute, and, in addition to personal anxieties, I was responsible to the Co-operative Holidays Association for the safe return of its inexperienced travellers. In addition, the hundreds of private English visitors who were in the valley in which Finhaut is situated promptly forgot their class prejudices, and sought to place themselves under such protection as an organized party could supply. The excursionists of the Co-operative Holidays Association were usually avoided, as not being 'quite nice.' Being composed of poor people they did not dress for dinner, and, alas! young men and women, who presumably were not engaged, had been seen walking arm in arm in the village street. This was more than the aggressive rectitude of the British female Philistine could stand, and they were ignored or frowned upon as they passed. Under the changed circumstances the association immediately became important. Deputations from stranded and frightened people in the other hotels, and from adjacent villages, came begging to be permitted to join us for the return journey.

It was my duty to do all that I could to help them, and with the assistance of an English clergyman, who was acting as chaplain in the district, a local committee of British people was formed. We took a census of the British population in the valley; their names, ages, and destination were carefully recorded. We then divided them into groups, and allotted to each man a group of ladies for whose safety he made himself personally responsible. The Scotch people, on this occasion, even consented to be registered as English!

My first and greatest difficulty was to persuade people not to rush down to Lausanne or Geneva, but to remain where they were until means of getting them home had been devised. I learned that thousands of frightened and thoughtless people had congregated in those towns, where there was little food, no available

accommodation, and where their only means were return railway tickets, which they could not use. The French nation could not provide the necessary trains owing to the urgent needs of the transportation of soldiers and war material.

Our task was an unenviable one, but we did what we could. My colleague, Mr. Farley, went to Berne, where the British minister was doing his best to arrange for the repatriation of British nationals, and for a month he gave voluntary service on the official central staff. Eventually things began to take shape, and one train each day was allotted to the English visitors. Each district was cleared in its turn, a number was given to each traveller, who was allotted the corresponding number in the train on the day appointed for his journey.

Some of the difficulties attending the return journey across France were amusing; but at least one was of a serious nature. Among the members of my party was a young German, long resident in London, a pacifist and a member of Christ Church in the Westminster Bridge Road. He was an attractive person, generally popular, and the C.H.A. was as much responsible for his safe return as for any other member of the party. But in supplying the list of those desiring to return to England I had to guarantee that all of them were British subjects. It was therefore impossible to send in his name with the others, as not only would it have been a breach of faith with the Swiss and French authorities, but there was the obvious danger to the man himself should he be discovered on French territory, and even had he reached England he might not have been readmitted. I was extremely sorry to have to leave him in Switzerland, where I hope he was sensible enough to remain.

Among the minor difficulties was that of dealing with our superfluous baggage. All heavy and unnecessary articles had to be left behind, and some of the women members of our now greatly enlarged company wept at the sacrifices they were compelled to make. One of them, who had planned to stay in Paris on her way home, had to bid farewell to a precious box containing five big hats! It was a painful scene; but with a bachelor's insensitiveness I was unable to certify that they were 'essential articles of clothing.'

The joy of reaching the shores of our own country aroused emotion in us all. The women, who had been brave beyond reproach, wept unrestrainedly when the boat bumped against the wharf at Folkestone, and when a facetious porter said: 'That's England, that is,' a half-tearful cockney replied, 'Yus; thenk

Gord.' Then there was the refreshing story of a rubicund Irish priest and his experiences in crossing the German frontier into Switzerland. The official on the German side had refused to allow him to cross, and accused him of being an English citizen. 'Indade then and I am not,' replied the indignant Irishman. 'What are you then?' shouted the impatient officer. He answered: 'I am a subject of his Holiness the Pope.' 'Show me your papers,' was the next demand, whereupon the resourceful priest produced an imposing-looking document, which, we were told, was a bishop's authority to celebrate the Mass. After a perplexed examination of this new form of passport his reverence was permitted to cross the frontier, when 'I turned round upon him and I said: "You go to hell, God bless ye."' When eventually I got my party safely to Charing Cross station I renounced for ever the congenial task of conducting parties to foreign lands.

While the war was in progress I was called upon to visit Wandsworth prison, where several young men belonging to ethical societies were detained as 'conscientious objectors' to military service. Like other prisoners they were entitled to receive the spiritual consolations of the religious body to which they belonged, and the Union of Ethical Societies was asked to care for their spiritual needs. In the course of a few months they were joined by some young Socialists, and for a long time I had twenty-seven prisoners on my list. The variety of the religious convictions of the conscientious objectors both interested and surprised the warders of the prison, one of whom said to me: 'I knew that there were Catholics and Protestants and Jews, but these fancy religions are new to me.' For two years I held a weekly service for these men, at which I gave a short address on such moral and spiritual problems as I considered would be helpful. They constituted the only compulsory audiences I have ever had; once they had made their choice of a 'chaplain,' they had to attend the services that he held, and in addition, to keep awake while he addressed them. I imagine that work of this kind is disappointing, even at its best. I certainly found it so. Here were twenty-seven young men, some of them highly educated, all of them intelligent, who had been compelled to face a great and urgent moral issue, and who, rather than betray a moral intuition, were willing to suffer the continued degradation of prison life. It appeared probable, therefore, under these circumstances, that when the war was over they would associate themselves with peace societies, Labour, and other

organizations and, for the rest of their lives, endeavour that no son of theirs should ever be faced with a crisis such as they had known. The armistice came, and they were released. I have, with one exception, never since seen or heard of them.

Soon after the outbreak of the war some difference of outlook arose between myself and the governing body of the I.L.P. in regard to policy. The whole power of the organization was used, and I thought rightly used, to protest against the war; but to my great regret, the protest quickly assumed the form of a perpetual and acrimonious discussion as to the measure of responsibility for its origin which belonged to the separate nations. The I.L.P. asserted with unexampled energy that Germany was no more responsible for the outbreak of hostilities than were other nations, including our own country; and for anything I knew to the contrary these accusations might rest upon a basis of fact, although my personal experience of the German mentality at the time of the Boer War made me doubt her innocence. In any case, the policy adopted by the I.L.P. appeared to me to be inappropriate to the immediate need, and to ignore an obvious and pressing obligation. After a war has broken out and national passions are inflamed it is too late to make a detailed inquiry as to the amount of responsibility which belongs to the respective combatants; the two urgent and sane things to do are to get the fighting stopped as quickly as possible, and to prepare to deal with the social and economic problems which, when it stops, it will leave behind. I therefore suggested to members of the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. that in the great emergency which had arisen the council should invite a score or so of the ablest men and women in the party to associate themselves with the N.A.C. in an advisory capacity, and that together they should devote themselves to the task of preparing plans to meet the economic situation which would arise when the war ended. I had intended this suggestion to be helpful, but it was considered almost as an affront. I had implied that the members of the council were in need of additional knowledge and experience, and whispers began to circulate that at the supreme test I lacked both courage and loyalty.

In due course it became necessary for me to address a specially convened meeting of the Huddersfield Trades and Labour Council in order to explain precisely where I stood. I stated at length what I conceived to be the appropriate policy of the party, and at the close I informed those present that while I had of necessity to

speaking, and try to live, the truth as I saw it, I had no right or desire to embarrass them, and that my resignation as their candidate was at their disposal. This was not, however, accepted, and at the end of the war I stood for election for the third time at the election in December 1918.

There was, of course, little chance of success, although my position in the constituency had steadily improved. My opponents deliberately appealed to the anger and the avarice of the electors by threatening to 'hang the Kaiser,' and by financially squeezing Germany 'until the pips squeaked'; whereas I sought to show that not only could this not be done, but that, even if it were done, it would be an economic disaster. I had not the least doubt that if I had been willing to compete with the two capitalist candidates in the low business of deceiving the electors, my chances of success would have been enormously increased; but I would rather have remained outside Parliament for ever than have won a seat on such ignoble conditions.

My personal relations with the other candidates were, as usual, excellent. One of them, Sir Charles Sykes, was a bluff and genial Yorkshireman, with whom it would at any time be difficult to quarrel; while Mr. Joseph Kay was a Tory cloth-manufacturer, of a quiet and gentlemanly disposition, who had the respect of every one who knew him. Sir Charles was notoriously a 'coupon candidate.' As a politician he did not carry heavy guns, but he tried to prejudice my chances by saying that my natural revolutionary voice had been carefully tuned down and tempered to the moral requirements of a most respectable constituency. I was not, he alleged, what I appeared to be, but a dangerous class-war Socialist; but when I retorted that whatever my opinions might be they were at least my own, whereas he resembled the 'pup on a poster' who listened obediently for 'his master's voice,' he did not return to the attack. We afterwards had some very friendly chaff concerning the incident.

The votes on this occasion were not counted until a fortnight after the polling, owing to the necessity of enabling men absent on military duty to record their votes by post. I knew, of course, that we had again been defeated and, after the close of the poll, I asked the Trades and Labour Council whether they thought it worth their while to spend some three pounds to bring me from London merely to be present at an adverse declaration. The reply was immediate, unanimous, and characteristic of

their gay courage and unfailing loyalty. It was: 'You mun coom.'

After the election was over I wished to retire, on the ground that after three defeats a change of candidate was desirable. They would not listen to any argument in favour of this course being adopted. They said: 'If you have to be defeated anywhere, it may as well be here where you are respected, and where your propaganda work has already been done.' I let it go at that, and I became their candidate for the fourth time.

CHAPTER XIV

PEACE: AMERICA: PARLIAMENT

To the British Parliament there is no rival. It is never outworn or senile, for it periodically renews its life on a completed franchise; and more than any other body, secular or ecclesiastical, it reflects the virtues, the shortcomings, and the character of the British people.—*Daily Life in Parliament*.

SHORTLY after the armistice, and as soon as the continental passenger traffic had been resumed, a meeting of the International Peace Bureau was called at its headquarters in Berne in Switzerland. Mr. Carl Heath, Miss C. Playne, and myself attended as the representatives of the British National Peace Council, and there were delegates present from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and France. It was pleasant to be able to renew acquaintances which had been so tragically interrupted by the war, and to confer with the leading pacifists of Europe as to the future activities of the bureau. When the conference ended I went on to Zermatt in order to discuss the situation with Professor Foerster, whose name had become widely known as one of the few Germans who had continuously resisted the influence of the military set in his own country, for their philosophy of *Weltmacht oder Untergang* had, he believed, brought the disaster of the war upon the world. We spent several days together, and on long walks to the Gornergrat and elsewhere, we discussed the question of the future relationship between Germany and England from every useful standpoint. On my return I reported to the National Peace Council on the situation as we had found it, and its work of promoting good international relationships was again resumed.

Early in the year 1919 I received an unexpected invitation from the Woolwich Labour Party to become one of their candidates for the East Woolwich Division at the approaching triennial election of members of the London County Council. Needless to say I was greatly gratified, for I had been absent from the borough for some years, and I regarded the invitation as a generous recognition of my past services. I had an intimate acquaintance with its people and their needs, and because I felt that the work of the

council would give me some experience of municipal administration on a large scale, I gladly accepted their invitation. My colleague was an old fellow-member of the Fabian Society, and when the election came, Dr. Haden Guest and myself were both returned by substantial majorities.

I served on the London County Council for six years, and I left it with real regret. Work on its committees made me acquainted with the practical details of the administration of the most important municipal body in the world, and with the problems connected with the governing of an area in which some four and a half millions of people resided. It was an experience that I would not willingly have missed. Matters involving party principles and policy often produced fierce debates at the weekly meetings of the full council, when the reports of the various committees came before it; but on the committees themselves, where the issues were concrete and practical, party differences were not obtruded. The committees on which I served were those of Public Health, Public Control, Fire, and Entertainments, but I frequently attended the meetings of other committees, and so became acquainted with the work of the council as a whole. I cannot imagine a better training for any one desiring to become a useful Member of Parliament than that he should serve his apprenticeship on a great municipal body.

In the year 1919 I made my first visit to the United States of America. The people of our own country were greatly depressed by the strain, and by the tragic losses of the war. Nearly every family lived in a house of mourning, the National Debt had mounted to astronomical figures, unemployment was heavy, and none of the facile promises of the recruiting patriots had been fulfilled. Profound suffering had depressed the nation's spirit, and England was a land of sorrow. I quickly found that the American psychology and outlook were dramatically different from our own. Here was a land which had faith in its own future. The American people no more doubted the continuity of progress in their land than they doubted that they lived. They were so certain of themselves that if a visitor took a critical or even a less optimistic view, he was not argued with or even answered; he was just pitied and ignored. They thought and spoke and sang, of America the golden—of America rich and destined to be blessed with a prosperity which would spread increasingly from sea to sea. Such a faith is marvellously helpful while it lasts. It was infectious to the extent

that it helped to give to me a new courage, and I returned home with a renewed hope.

I have visited America many times since then, and I have the happiest memories of that great country. There can never have been a more generous or hospitable people to the stranger within their gates. It is, I believe, easier in America to arouse prejudice against England than against any other nation, and its politicians and journalists habitually endeavour to twist the lion's tail; but the American people are consistently friendly to the individual Englishman, whom they receive with an almost embarrassing hospitality.

I was more impressed with New England than with other parts of America, perhaps because its history and the names of its famous sons were better known to me than were those of New York or Indiana. I had the privilege, while in Boston, of visiting the house of James Russell Lowell, whose poetry had greatly influenced me, and I visited places of worship made wonderful to me because of their association with Emerson. In comparison with these small but deeply significant churches, the flaunting temple of Mary Baker Eddy appeared trivial and vulgar.

I had made the acquaintance of Mr. H. W. L. Dana, the grandson of Longfellow, on one of his visits to London, and it was a great privilege to me to receive from his aunt, Longfellow's daughter, a generous invitation to visit her and him in Longfellow's home, and to experience the thrill of sitting in the chair which he used and which stood before the table upon which he did his work. Miss Longfellow was most kind, and I left her house with pleasant and abiding memories. At Philadelphia there was the further excitement of visiting the old home of William Penn, the famous Hall of Independence, and with Valley Forge, which was so closely associated with the revolutionary war. The White House, at Washington, was for a visiting Englishman specially significant, because it had sheltered Abraham Lincoln, and it was a special joy to me to be able to visit Mount Vernon, where Washington's old home is situated. While in New York I also had the privilege of visiting Mrs. Eva Ingersoll Brown and her family, in the old home of her late father, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous freethought orator.

New York is a thrilling, if not a restful, city. In many respects it is a century ahead of London; in others it is almost primitive by comparison. Its people are delightful, and there is something electrical in its clean and stimulating air. But it is a place of rush

and rattle, and it lacks the restful dignity of London. I understand and respect the love of Americans for 'little old New York,' but I again say that London is good enough for me.

When I became one of its members on the London County Council the Eastern Division of the Borough of Woolwich was represented in Parliament by the late Mr. Will Crooks, who was a conspicuous and popular figure in the life of London. His breezy temperament and his alluring cockney accent, helped by an inexhaustible fund of East End stories, made him one of the most acceptable public speakers of his day. His ability to describe the privations and the humour of London slum life was unequalled, and his frequent recourse to this theme in his public speeches led those who did not know him to assume that he was just a common sob-stuff orator, whose words were of little worth. Crooks was not well read, but he had a head filled with horse sense, and he had a well-developed Cockney shrewdness, both as regards public and his own personal affairs. When he died tens of thousands of the people of East London attended his funeral in order to express their gratitude to one who had so conspicuously loved and served them.

Some time before his death, Crooks had been compelled through continued ill-health to withdraw from public work, and to resign his seat in Parliament. The election of his successor was the occasion of an unexampled orgy of violence and slander. A more discreditable election never took place in any community. The Labour Party chose as their candidate Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who had lost his seat at the general election of 1918. MacDonald was not a novice at electioneering, and he must have foreseen the hazards of the enterprise. He had been one of the foremost opponents of the war policy of the Government, and his alleged association with the still-born Council of Action had brought upon him every epithet in the British journalist's rich vocabulary of abuse. Moreover, Woolwich was not only a military town, containing, in addition to a garrison, an arsenal in which some ten thousand men were employed in the manufacture of armaments; it was also a London constituency, upon which the concentrated venom of the London Press, which had slandered Lord Haldane out of office, and driven Prince Louis of Battenberg from the Admiralty, could be directed.

MacDonald seemed doomed to be defeated, and he was. I was present at the adoption meeting, and as Arthur Henderson and myself left it, we agreed that there was something ominous in its

tone. There was no disorder; but there was a half-sullen lack of response which indicated what the end would be. This was not surprising. Any one who opposes the war passions of a people must expect to be scourged by them. MacDonald had pleaded for a sober peace when they were drunk with war; and they revenged themselves upon him. The task of organizing the patriotic indignation of the constituency was assumed by or entrusted to the late Mr. Horatio Bottomley, and thousands of the delicate-minded followers of that edifying patriot invaded the borough and conducted the kind of rough-house campaign which was appropriate to their character, and dear to the heart of their leader. The Tory candidate was a man exactly suited to the occasion. Captain Robert Gee, V.C., was a brave man and a fine soldier; but as a politician he was both inconsiderable and naïve. An indifferent speaker, he was always ready to challenge any one who corrected or interrupted him to come upon the platform to fight. The Tory Party in the borough were delighted, and the constituency went patriotically mad and dirty. Labour women were assaulted, MacDonald was stoned, execrated, and defeated: England's honour was saved—by Horatio Bottomley!

The question of how the lost seat was to be regained for the Labour Party was immediately taken in hand by the local Labour Party and, after a careful review of the situation I received a unanimous invitation to become their candidate. My connection with the borough was of long standing, I had done some of the pioneer work which led to the formation both of the local and the national Labour parties; I was also one of its representatives on the London County Council, and it was considered that I could regain the seat. The Huddersfield Trades and Labour Council agreed, with characteristic generosity, to free me from any obligation to them, and I separated from them with feelings of lasting gratitude for their never-failing kindness. To my old friends Mr. and Mrs. Ben Riley, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Haigh, Mr. and Mrs. Shaw Bray, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Beaumont, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Whiteley, whose guest I had been on many occasions, I was specially indebted, and I have the most pleasing memories of a town which, although it persistently rejected me as a candidate, was invariably tolerant, courteous, and appreciative.

When the general election came in 1922, the patriotic anger of the by-election had been superseded by a grim anxiety respecting unemployment. Woolwich, for a period, was one of the black

spots of the land. During the years of the war the Government had imported into the borough many thousands of men for the manufacture of armaments. When it no longer needed them it left them more or less a burden on the local rates. It was no discredit to Captain Gee, the sitting member, that his experience was not equal to the situation which had arisen, or that he had lost favour in the constituency. His powers lay in other directions, and whenever he ceased trying to be a politician he was an entirely companionable man. At the very beginning of the campaign I appealed to my supporters to give him a courteous and attentive hearing, but afterwards I never again mentioned his name, or in any way referred to him. This neglect forced him to deal with political rather than with personal matters, and long before the day of the election he had been reduced to incoherence and tedious repetition. The constituency returned to its old allegiance to the Labour Party, and elected me by a majority of nearly five thousand votes.

I have elsewhere endeavoured to describe the emotions of a thoughtful man on the day when, for the first time, he becomes a member of the British Parliament, and the thrill that he feels when he makes his first appearance at its doors.¹ 'If the new member is a normal healthy human being, possessing some knowledge of the history of his country and the place of Parliament in its wonderful story, he will probably regard this as the greatest day of his life. . . . The majesty of the place, and what it has meant in British history may arouse in him a keen desire to be worthy of its great traditions: he may even feel moved to take the boots from his feet. In Westminster Hall, through which he passes, Charles the First was tried and sentenced, Warren Hastings faced his judges, and Strafford was impeached. Its walls saw the installation of Cromwell as Lord Protector, and the trial and acquittal of the seven bishops in the reign of James the Second. Charles the First passed through it when he made the historic attempt to arrest the five members of Parliament. . . . Near by, Titus Oates and Wilkes did penance for their faults or convictions, and Raleigh "with a quiet and dignified humour" met his death in 1618. Every stone and corridor will remind him of the past and, as he enters into the House of Commons itself, he will reflect that here were heard the mighty voice of Gladstone, the pure diction of Bright, and the flowery rhetoric of Disraeli. . . . If our new member is not moved

¹ *Daily Life in Parliament.*

to emotion as he enters upon his great heritage, or if he remains unaware of his partnership in the great fellowship of service which the House of Commons represents, his life there may be useful, but it can scarcely be happy.'

These words were a description of my own emotions on becoming a Member of Parliament, and they represent my present feelings. I have no sympathy and little patience with those who constantly decry the British Parliament, which more than any other institution makes England a safe and blessed place in which to dwell. Carlyle described the members of the House of Commons as 'six-hundred talking asses,' and he appealed to Sir Garnet Wolseley to 'lock the door of yonder place and turn them all about their business,' but the growling old dyspeptic did not tell the great soldier what he was to put in their place. Nor have its many less distinguished detractors. Having taken a modest part in its deliberations, and not being blind to its imperfections, I repeat that even in our own day, it is not 'altogether unworthy of its history, and its high purpose, and to it, if anywhere, we must look for a solution of the disturbing social problems of our time.'

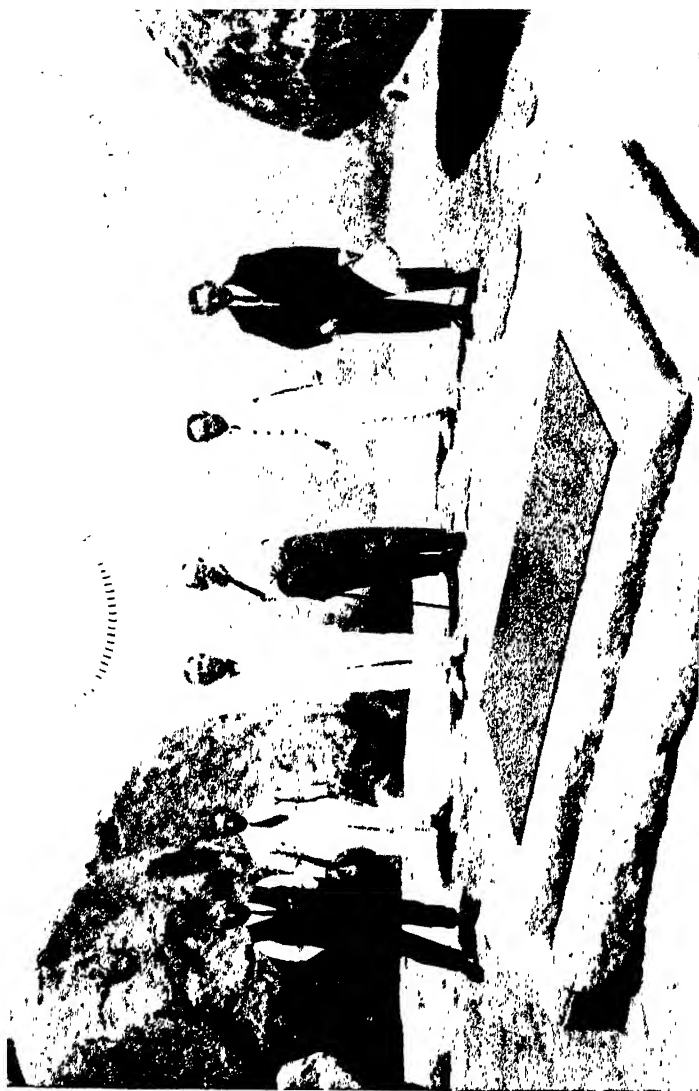
I had never consciously desired to become a Member of Parliament. If I may confess to the weakness of an ambition, it was to become an acceptable interpreter of modern views of life and religion and, as far as the iron law of circumstance had permitted I had remained loyal to that desire. I had therefore no conscious pride of achievement when I began my work in Parliament, but rather a humble sense of great responsibility, and I determined that, so far as industry and strength would serve me, I would try to prove myself not unworthy of the trust that had been reposed in me. My conception of the duty and responsibility of a Member of Parliament has remained constant. When a man takes upon himself the task of helping to make the laws by which a people will be governed, laws that for good or ill will affect their freedom and well-being, he is engaged in as solemn an act as the soldier who, with all his strength, is taking part in a battle for the safety of a nation; in both cases failure means disaster.

Owing to the urgency of the question of unemployment at Woolwich I was called upon to address the House of Commons during the first week of my parliamentary life, and before I had become acquainted with the moods and quality of the House. A 'maiden speech' is an ordeal which every new member fears, and the feeling of relief when it is over, especially if it has been well

received, is unbelievable to those who have not experienced it. If the novice could go into the House and deliver his speech without having to wait until called, his anxieties would be reduced; in practice, he must sit for many hours waiting for his chance, and although he may be both tired and hungry, he dare not leave the Chamber lest the precious opportunity should be missed. These trying conditions affect his nerves, and after he has listened to perhaps a dozen speeches, in which there may have been put forward arguments which he had prepared for his own use, he is probably called upon when he is tired and his nerves are frayed beyond repair.

The young speaker in the House of Commons has really nothing to fear, for, although it is one of the most critical, it is also one of the most generous assemblies in the world, and every old parliamentarian, remembering his own experience, is ready to prompt and encourage him. The beginner is judged by the manner rather than by the matter of his speech. The House dislikes conceit and swagger, and it distrusts emotion almost as much as it hates dullness; it quickly takes its revenge upon those who seek to win its approval by mere fluency and self-assurance. But if the young member throws himself upon its generosity, if he is courteous in his manner, deferential to its prestige without being servile, if he is sincere without affectation, and in simple words tries to say what is in his mind, he will be received with respectful attention and gracious encouragement.

Before I became a member of it I had read a hundred times that the House of Commons was 'the best club in London'; that it was a place of indolence and leisure, and that the amusements, or slumbers, of its members, were disturbed only when the division bells rang, when, with no knowledge of the issue to be decided, they were directed by their whips into an approved lobby, where they voted 'just as their leaders tell 'em to.' I do not know the name of the fool who first published such injurious nonsense; but I do know that it has only a remote resemblance to the truth. The House of Commons is indeed very little like a club, and it can make little claim to being comfortable. As a workshop, it is badly equipped; it is overcrowded, and it is unhealthy. Its recreative amenities are restricted to one smoking room, which on a generous estimate would not hold more than fifty of its six hundred and fifteen members. The modern side of its library is shamefully inadequate, and the facilities provided for its members for the



South African Railways and Harbours
SOUTH AFRICA, 1924: AT THE GRAVE OF C. J. RHODES IN THE MATOPPO HILLS

storage of their papers are limited to a locker of about the size of a hat-box.

The dignity of the place is for the most part in its external appearance. In that respect it is the most impressive legislative building in the world.

The statement that the House of Commons is a place of somnolent leisure is equally far from the truth. Now that I am no longer a member of it, I can, with a more appropriate emphasis, assert that the daily life of a capable and conscientious member of Parliament, especially one who represents a commercial, or a London, constituency, is one of constant toil and much self-denial. In my little book, *Daily Life in Parliament*, I tried to describe the sort of life that the average member leads, and the demands that his duties make upon his time and strength, and if that description prompts the reader to inquire why men are so eager to follow such an arduous and unhealthy occupation, the answer 'is entirely creditable both to them and to the nation.' 'The rewards of parliamentary life are moral rather than material, and there is a justifiable satisfaction and pride in being chosen as one of the six hundred and fifteen to whose judgment and loyalty is entrusted the honour of the "Mother of Parliaments," and the welfare of the greatest empire that the world has known. To have their names added to the list of those who, throughout the centuries, have kept watch and ward over England's welfare is considered to be the crowning event in a man's career, and there are few British citizens, however distinguished in other walks of life, who would refuse so coveted an honour.'

The first months of my life as a member of the House were devoted to a close study of the machinery of Parliament, to its rules of procedure, and to the vital question of the kind of work that I should aim to do. I successfully resisted the temptation to speak too frequently, and I deliberately remained silent upon questions concerning which I thought myself to be ill-informed. My experience as a member of the London County Council, where there is a wholesome rule which limits the time of a speech to fifteen minutes, had given me some training in the art of compression, and I usually managed to express my thoughts upon the subject under discussion within that time.

The choice of a special field of labour was both difficult and important, for the business of Parliament is so vast in its range and covers so many subjects that even the most industrious member

cannot hope to do useful work in more than a very restricted section of its activities. Any one who takes up the time of the House in speaking on what he does not understand is promptly and continuously ignored as a bore and a nuisance; but the member who is informed upon a particular subject is welcomed as a speaker and is indeed expected to help the House in its deliberations.

I had for many years been convinced that the attitude towards the British Empire, which the Labour Party had inherited from a generation of anti-colonial Liberals and Radicals, needed revision, and more than twenty years earlier I had prepared a syllabus for a course of lectures on the Colonies and the British Labour movement, which I had proposed should be given under the Hutchinson Trust lecture scheme of the Fabian Society. It appeared, therefore, that I might make a useful contribution to the work of Parliament and also best serve my party, if, in addition to keeping myself informed upon a few major internal problems, I devoted myself to the study of imperial affairs, in relation to the welfare of the Colonies, Protectorates, the Mandated Territories, and also to the vast and complicated problem of India.

The word 'Empire,' and much of what it represented, was intensely disliked by Socialists and by members of the Labour Party, mostly because of its previous significance. The old imperialism was associated with an outlook and with activities which the Labour Party could never support, and our members sincerely distrusted the motives of the average Empire booster. His constant recourse to phrases such as that it was England's mission to assume 'the white man's burden,' and that she should devote herself to the great imperial task of saving the 'black man's soul,' filled us with misgiving.

These were precisely the kind of pious assertions behind which the avaricious exploiter loved to take shelter, and we were not in the least degree deceived by them. Moreover, we did not understand why the imperialists should not be frank about the matter, and admit that the motive behind the building of the empire was not moral nor philanthropic, but political and economic. The main intention had been to open up new opportunities for the profitable investment of British capital, to exploit the minerals, etc., to be found in Africa and elsewhere, and to secure desirable areas for settlement purposes.

England did not take possession of Africa, India, or any other place, for philanthropic or religious purposes. These motives

may not have been entirely absent from her plans, but they were undoubtedly merely auxiliary to the economic purpose. The urge which prompts a modern Western nation to 'colonize' a backward territory, is never anxiety concerning the black man's soul, nor enthusiasm for his social welfare, but is always connected with the economic needs of its own people. Before the time when precious metals were discovered in Africa, the European bearer of 'the white man's burden' rarely visited that wonderful land for her own charms, but as soon as the pathway of imperial duty appeared to be paved with gold, he immediately rushed to embrace her. The traveller and the missionary were frequently the innocent pioneers; the trader, the hunter, the land-stealer, and concession cheat, were their sinister camp-followers.

These views of modern imperialism were held and expressed by the whole of the Labour movement, and if the situation had not been hopelessly prejudiced by irrevocable facts, I should have asked myself the question whether any European power had any moral right to be in Africa at all. The process of economic exploitation, and the political invasion by white men of tropical areas, had, however, already gone far beyond the possibility of retreat. The old policy of abandonment was, therefore, out of date; but there was at least a possible and helpful alternative—to try to develop the colonial possessions on lines which would enrich and ennoble their native peoples, and 'prepare them gradually to take their place in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It was to this practical and moral imperial problem that I decided to devote my studies.

Early in the history of the Parliament of 1922 a group of Labour members, consisting of the late Mr. W. S. Royce, Dr. Haden Guest, Mr. George Lansbury, Mr. Tom Johnston, and myself, formed a Labour Commonwealth Group of members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The first president and secretary were Mr. Royce and Dr. Haden Guest, who were succeeded shortly afterwards by Mr. Lansbury and myself. I remained the secretary of the group for seven years, and it was the one study group in the House of Commons which, year after year, aroused the keen and unabated interest of its members. Weekly meetings were held in the room of the Empire Parliamentary Association in Westminster Hall, and in the last session before the fall of the Labour Government in 1931, there was an average attendance of more than fifty members.

The primary purpose of the group was the study of imperial problems, and invitations to address it were generously responded to by visiting dominion statesmen, colonial and Indian administrators, missionaries, settlers, Indian politicians, and members of various native races, and by leading members of the Liberal and Tory parties in both Houses of Parliament. When the Right Hon. J. H. Whitley visited the group to speak to it on the work of the Indian Industrial Commission, of which he had been the chairman, its members paid him the pretty compliment of standing to receive him, just as they had done hundreds of times when, as Mr. Speaker, he had entered the House for prayers.

The organization of these meetings involved considerable anxiety and labour, but in the end I had the satisfaction of believing that the Labour members, taking them man for man, had a better knowledge of empire problems than any other section of the House.

My work on empire questions necessarily brought me into close contact with the Empire Parliamentary Association, and with Sir Howard D'Egville, its able and diligent secretary. The usefulness of this organization can scarcely be exaggerated. It promotes co-operation and goodwill between the mother country and different parts of the empire, and it is the recognized centre to which members of the dominion parliaments, colonial legislatures, and Indian representative bodies come on their visits to London. They meet their friends in its rooms, and are brought into contact with people from their own and other parts of the empire, and also with members of both Houses of the British Parliament. Seats are reserved for them in the Commons galleries, and they are made to feel 'that they are there as of right and not on sufferance.' It is a pity that the rooms of the association are too small for its very responsible work.

The demands made upon the time and strength of an active member of Parliament involve serious personal sacrifice. He has little time available for his private affairs, and none at all for social engagements. If, as was the case in the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929, his party is in office in a minority position, the House becomes a prison, with the whips of his party as jailers. They forbid him to leave the place except under circumstances of the greatest urgency, and I have upon hundreds of occasions been within the precincts of the House from ten in the morning of one day to the early hours of the next.

Members of Parliament are paid, as a contribution towards their

expenses, four hundred pounds per annum, a sum which appears to the average wage earner to place them in a most enviable financial position; but the member who has no other source of income, who has in addition to maintain a London home during the session, and meet the heavy expenses that service in Parliament involves, knows that he can make ends meet only by extra work, or by economies that sometimes border upon privation.

During practically the whole of my adult life I had worked seven days a week, the Sunday labour being frequently the most exhausting. Soon after the war I was enabled to reduce the number of my Sunday engagements, through the entirely unexpected and insistent consideration of a friend who desired anonymously to place at my disposal a generous sum of money as a personal contribution to my public work. For various reasons I was very reluctant to accept this offer, which was eventually submitted to the judgment of a distinguished mutual friend who, with a full knowledge of the circumstances, unhesitatingly and with emphasis advised me to agree to it. No conditions were attached to the gift, but I never considered the capital sum as being a part of my personal estate. Later, when losses from my investments during and following the war had been replaced by additional savings, I sought either to return it, or to arrange for its disposal after my death in a way approved of by the kindly donor, but my offer was promptly and finally declined. I have tried to repay the generosity of the friend concerned by continued and conscientiously performed public service.

One of the chief torments of a member's life is the answering of letters, most of which should not have been written, and some of which reflect discredit on those who write them. No inconsiderable number of the British public appear to think that the chief duty of a member of Parliament is to attend to their personal claims, and that he should always place these before the needs of the nation. Mr. MacDonagh in his readable book, *The Pageant of Parliament*, quotes a letter written to a member from a constituent who had 'carried him in on his own shoulder.' It said: 'You're a fraud, and you know it. I don't care a rap for the billet or the money either, but you could hev got it for me if you wasn't so mean. . . . Soon after you was elected by my hard workin', a feller here wanted to bet me that You wouldn't be in the House more than a week before you made a ass of yourself. I bet him a Cow on that as I thort you was worth it then. After I got

Your Note saying you deklined to ackt in the matter, I driv the Cow over to the Feller's place an' told him he had won her. . . . That 's all I got for shouting meself Hoarse for you on pole day an' months befoar.'

On every day that Parliament meets there are numerous meetings, either official or called by the parties in connection with Bills that are before the House, or are being prepared for introduction. A member has therefore little opportunity for the quiet research and reflection which is an essential condition of satisfactory parliamentary work, and the amount of printed material that he is called upon to read is unbelievable.

During the first three years that I was a member of Parliament I was also a member of the London County Council, and this greatly added to my responsibilities.

As a result of the general election of 1924 the Labour Party was called upon to form a Government. One section of the party, foreseeing that, owing to its minority position, it would be ineffective, compromised, and misunderstood, was opposed to its taking office under such unsatisfactory conditions. Another section, which included most of those referred to, were in favour of taking office, if an uncompromising Socialist programme were announced in the King's Speech. The leaders of the party, however, decided that it was advisable at all costs to refute, once and for ever, the cheap taunt that Labour could not form an efficient Government. Mr. Winston Churchill constantly adorned his rhetoric with this kind of assertion; but he probably only meant that any administration that he did not lead, and could not intimidate, could not rightly be called a 'Government.'

In any case, the first Labour Government in the history of the British nation was formed, with ministers, most of whom faced the responsibilities of office for the first time. I was not a member of it, and my estimate of its quality is to that extent unbiased. Its shortcomings were obvious even to its supporters; but there was no need to apologize for it, either to the Liberals or to the Tories. I knew all of its ministers more or less intimately, and taking their respective individual capacities into consideration, I had not the least doubt that in experience, in application to their duties, and in devotion to their country, they were not inferior to any team that the other parties could have put at the disposal of their country. They managed the business of the country with dignity and efficiency, and, in spite of the campaign of slander to which they

were subjected immediately they assumed office, the country as a whole was proud of the fact that a body of workmen, from factory, mine, and office, could with strong and capable hands govern the greatest empire that the world had known. My personal pride in it was keen and satisfying. I had taken a humble part in the work of creating the Labour Party, I had been present at its birth, I had helped to nourish and guide it in its early years, and I rejoiced when at last it became responsible for the government of the country.

Those among the members of the Labour Party who were opposed to its taking office were soon justified by events. Without a majority in the House it was in an impossible position. Neither of the two opposition parties sought immediately to butcher it outright, but they continued to place upon it every humiliation that political ingenuity and malice could invent. The relationship between the Labour and Liberal parties quickly became acute and strained. Mr. Asquith was majestically patronizing, and his followers were waspishly critical. The late Mr. Pringle assumed the congenial role of the unofficial, but nevertheless encouraged, *agent provocateur*, and the Liberal Party soon became thoroughly detested. Owing to the minority position of the Government it was essential that every one of its supporters should be in attendance at the House from the moment it began its labours until it stood adjourned; whereas it appeared that most of the members of the Liberal Party were not sufficiently interested in the work of Parliament to attend until fairly late in the evening when, fresh and well-nourished, they exploited every device of parliamentary obstruction to keep the House sitting until the last trains had gone, and the tired and penurious Labour men had to walk to their lodgings. That this was deliberately intended cannot, of course, be proved, but knowledge of the strain that it placed upon poor and often aged men rarely showed itself in chivalrous consideration.

The Tories were less adept and used blunter weapons. They wished, to use Mr. Churchill's elegant diction, to 'cut its dirty throat,' and within a couple of months of the Government's assuming office a vote of censure was moved on the ground that it had not in that short time solved the problem of unemployment.

As soon as the Labour Government was formed I became a member of the first consultative committee of the party, under the chairmanship of Mr. Robert Smillie. When in opposition the party had an executive committee which advised as to the policy

to be adopted in regard to the business before the House, but when it assumed office the Government itself became responsible for its own policy. The function of the consultative committee was to interpret that policy to the members of the party, to receive their suggestions and criticisms, to make these known to the Prime Minister or the heads of departments, and generally to try to keep the party united and keen. The committee met almost every day, and sometimes more than once, and work upon it required considerable tact and patience. Dozens of outside organizations, whose connection with the Labour Party was slight or uncertain, sought to use the committee to induce the Government to disregard both its conscience and its convenience, in order to satisfy their particular needs. In at least one case where the committee was threatened with the hostility at the next election of a great organization, unless the needs of its members took precedence over those of every other section of the community, it became necessary in three short and forcible words to tell it precisely where to go. The committee had to meet situations of this kind almost every day, and to its labours was due a part of such success as the short-lived Labour Government achieved.

While in office the Labour Government decided to appoint a Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of the Right Hon. H. P. Macmillan, K.C. (now Lord Macmillan), 'to inquire as regards England and Wales into the existing law and administrative machinery in connection with the certification, detention, and care of persons who are, or are alleged to be, of unsound mind; to consider as regards England and Wales the extent to which provision is or should be made for the treatment without certification of persons suffering from mental disorder, and to make recommendations.' I was gratified when the Government asked me to join this commission, the other members of which were the late Earl Russell, Sir Humphry Rolleston, Bt., Sir David Drummond, Sir William Jowitt, K.C., Sir Ernest Hiley, Mr. N. Micklem, K.C., Mrs. C. J. Mathew, and Miss Madeline Symons.

The commission began the hearing of witnesses on the 17th October 1924, and its report was issued on the 7th July 1926. The work on the commission involved many visits to mental hospitals, and interviews with some patients who had stated that they were being illegally detained, and with others who had complained of actual ill-treatment. These visits were made without previous notice, and they were on the whole of a reassuring nature.

Powers had been given to the commissioners 'to call for information in writing and also to call for, have access to, and examine all such books, documents, registers, and records as may afford them the fullest information,' and these were in all cases immediately supplied.

Several of the patients suffering from recurrent attacks of nervous disorder were apparently in normal health at the time that I interviewed them, but I was assured by the medical superintendents, and I was myself generally satisfied, that exposure to the strain of competitive life, before they were fully restored to health, would result in another and possibly a severer illness. The anxiety of a patient to resume his place in the world directly he feels himself strong enough to do so, is equalled only by that of the responsible medical man when he feels it necessary to detain for a further few weeks a patient whom he would like at once to discharge.

Some of the recommendations made by the commissioners have already become a part of the law of the land, but further reforms are needed before the nation can feel satisfied that the treatment provided for the mentally sick is wholly satisfactory. The members of the commission were divided on the very difficult and important question of mental hospitals, homes, and similar institutions, that were run for private profit. Some of them felt that 'the system under which private profit is derived from the care and treatment of the insane, involving for the medical man in charge the possibility of a conflict between duty and interest,' was wholly wrong, and 'Sir Ernest Hiley, Sir William Jowitt, Mr. Snell, Mrs. Mathew, and Miss Symons' were 'opposed in principle to the detention of the insane in houses conducted for private profit,' notwithstanding that the evidence produced left them in no doubt 'that in present circumstances there is a continued demand for this class of accommodation.'¹

The work of the commission was both depressing and full of interest; but I felt that the anxious labour of two years would be well repaid if it helped to make easier the lot of a class of sufferers who have the complete sympathy of their fellow-citizens.

During the summer of 1924 I received an invitation from the Empire Parliamentary Association to join a delegation to South Africa as the guests of the Government and the people of the Union, for the purpose of making a rapid but intensive study of the problems and conditions; political, social, and economic, in the

¹ *Report of Commission*, Cmd. 2700, p. 170.

Dominion of South Africa, in Southern Rhodesia, and in the Protected Territories of Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland. African questions had for some years aroused my closest interest, and I welcomed the opportunity of a personal contact with them. The delegation was led by Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P. (Secretary of State for the Colonies), the other members of the company being the late Viscount Burnham, the late Mr. W. J. Baker, M.P., Captain W. Brass, M.P., Sir Robert Hamilton, M.P., Sir Douglas McGarel Hogg, M.P. (now Lord Hailsham), Mr. Ramsay Muir, M.P., Dr. Clarke, M.P., Mr. A. A. Somerville, M.P., Mr. James Welsh, M.P., Captain Douglas Hacking, M.P., and myself, and we were accompanied by Sir Howard D'Egville, the Secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association.

The Government of the South African Union had also invited representatives from the branches of the association in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and the Canadian delegation, led by the late Sir George Foster, C.M.G., accompanied us on our outward journey. The party was received in Cape Town at the town hall by the city authorities, by the Government at the Houses of Parliament, where we attended a sitting of the House of Representatives, and by his Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Athlone, G.C.M.G., the High Commissioner for South Africa, and Princess Alice, at Government House, where we had the privilege of meeting the Prime Minister of the Union (General Hertzog), General Smuts, and many other distinguished public men. On the following day we continued our journey by sea to Durban in Natal, where the tour which had been planned was to begin, and where the Australasian delegates had already arrived.

The arrangements both for study and for the comfort of the delegations were in the hands of Mr. O. D. Clough, C.M.G., Clerk to the Union Senate and honorary secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association (South African branch), assisted by Lieut.-Commander Maurice Green, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, and they were complete to a degree, which placed all their guests in their debt. A specially equipped and fully staffed train was placed at the disposal of the delegation, and we had the assistance of expert students and advisers throughout the journey. I thoroughly enjoyed every hour that I spent in the country, and I remember gratefully a most informing ride through Zululand in the car of Mr. G. Heaton Nichols, the member in the Legislative Assembly for that beautiful country.

We had the good fortune to have with us throughout our journey the veteran statesman, Senator F. W. Reitz, and also his distinguished son, Colonel Denijs Reitz, who between them so admirably represented the South Africa of the past and the present. Senator Reitz was then approaching his eightieth birthday, but his years sat lightly upon him, and he constantly imposed upon himself physical tasks from which younger men asked to be excused. He had been President Kruger's secretary at the time of the great crisis, and he had personally drafted the letter to England which had caused the South African War. He knew English literature better than most Englishmen, and I spent many profitable hours listening to his wise and kindly judgments on men and books. His son, Colonel Denijs Reitz, had more definitely reconciled himself to the changes which the war had produced and, as a member of the South African Party led by General Smuts, his thoughts were more with the present and the future than with the past. He very kindly gave me specimens of old native digging stones, which, together with some Rhodesian divining bones used by witch doctors, kindly given to me in Southern Rhodesia, I subsequently gave to the African section of the British Museum.

We were entertained most generously at our many stopping places, and there was much general conversation and speech-making. On the principle of 'safety first,' the selected orators were at first drawn from the delegates representing the Liberal and Tory parties, the Labour members being allotted silent parts. Eventually I was asked to address a large out-of-door demonstration of natives at Umtata, at which the chiefs from the Pongo and other tribes were present with their followers. Before my speech Colonel Reitz mockingly ran his hands over me to make sure, as he said, that I had no incendiary material on me, after which I spoke to the great gathering, each phrase being translated before another began. I was a practised open-air speaker, and what I said appeared to please not only the natives themselves, but also the apprehensive white South Africans.

They had the wildest notions respecting the members of the Labour Party, and they were relieved and surprised at my remarks. They had apparently expected me to preach 'Marxian discontent' to the assembled natives, whose immediate needs were peace, and rain for their fields. I afterwards addressed the students at Lovedale College, and, when we visited the Matoppos in Southern Rhodesia, I was selected to speak to the members of the combined

delegations on the significance of the work of the great man whose grave we had just visited, and whose name had been given to the youngest of the British dominions.

When at Bulawayo I stayed at Government House, and sat under the palaver tree used by Lobengula as a place of judgment, and from Salisbury we visited the interesting and famous Zimbabwe ruins, and we saw some most interesting bushman wall-paintings in near-by caves.

On our return to Bulawayo, while on our way to the Victoria Falls and the Zambesi River, a cablegram was handed to me stating that the Labour Government had been defeated, that the dissolution of Parliament was imminent, and urging my immediate return. The other sections of the British delegation were without news, but I at once placed the information before them. There was a unanimous desire to return home with the least possible delay, but as the next boat would not leave for a week we were able to proceed on our journey to the Victoria Falls, where we arrived at five o'clock on Sunday morning, in time to see the sun rise on one of the most thrilling sights in the world. During the day we had an excursion on the Zambesi River, and in the evening we had the privilege of entertaining to dinner at the Victoria Falls hotel, on his eightieth birthday, our venerable and friendly companion, Senator Reitz, and his son, Colonel Denijs Reitz. On Monday we took the midday train for Cape Town, and on the following Friday we sailed for home. It was most disappointing to have to leave before our tour had been completed, but we arrived home two days before the election took place, when, although I had been absent throughout the campaign, I was again returned for East Woolwich by a satisfactory majority.

The result of the general election was that a Conservative Government was formed. It is not usual for political parties to be fastidious either in regard to their associates or as to the methods by which they seek, and sometimes attain, electoral success, and the Tory Party welcomed from the *Daily Mail* the notorious and malodorous 'Red Letter' as eagerly as if it had been both clean and authentic. Nor was the nation as a whole nauseated by its smell. The Labour Government had seriously offended its sensitive taste by treating the Russian Communist Government with a courtesy which its predecessors had always extended to the Governments of the hanging Czars. But in the alleged interests of political purity the Labour Government had to be



TRINIDAD, 1926: GOVERNMENT HOUSE



THE HOUSE PARTY AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE

defeated, and the Red Letter was accepted as a decent and effective weapon.

In October 1926 I was invited by Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to serve as one of a commission of two members of Parliament, to visit British Guiana 'to consider and report on the economic condition of the colony, the causes which have hitherto been retarded, and the measures which could be taken to promote development, and any facts which they may consider to have a bearing on the above matters.'

The other member of the commission was Mr. R. Roy Wilson (now Sir Roy Wilson), the Conservative member for Lichfield, and with Mr. R. R. Sedgwick of the Colonial Office as our secretary, we arrived at Georgetown on the 16th November. We were also accompanied by Mrs. Wilson, and on our outward journey we made a careful inspection of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, in the island of Trinidad, where we were most generously entertained at Government House by the Governor of the colony, the late Sir Horace Byatt, and Lady Byatt.

The problems that confronted us upon our arrival in British Guiana were both urgent and confusing. The colony is the only British possession on the mainland of South America; it has an area slightly larger than that of Great Britain, but with a population of only 300,000, mostly confined to the coastal area. Much of the interior is covered by dense forests, and is for the most part unexplored. Except in the coastal sugar-growing area it possesses few roads, and the Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo rivers are not navigable except for small boats, which have to be carried over several cataract barriers. The occupied coastal lands are actually below sea-level, and 'on this alluvial belt, below sea-level, or within tidal influence,' the capital of the colony, 'its staple industry, and the bulk of its population have been situated since the days when it belonged to the Dutch.' We quickly arrived at the conclusion that one of the chief causes of the economic backwardness of the colony was 'the sheer physical difficulties which have hitherto retarded the development, not only of British Guiana, but of the whole continent to which it belongs,'¹ and we were now convinced that 'the financial position' of the colony was 'unsound and the outlook serious.'

Because of the character of its constitution which had survived without substantial structural alteration from the days of the

¹ *Report of the British Guiana Commission*, Cmd. 2841, 1927.

Dutch occupation, the Secretary of State could not sanction its loans being floated in England under the Colonial Stock Acts, which meant that the colony was at a disadvantage in the London money market, and we were, for these and other reasons, driven to suggest such modifications of the constitution as would 'assure a consistent financial policy,' and give to the Government 'the power in the last resort, and under proper safeguards, to enforce their own decisions.'

Some of the criticisms and suggestions that the commissioners thought it right to make were bitterly resented by a section of the residents of the colony, who desired to retain the old form of constitution, even though it worked badly and was not capable of growth. Upon myself, chiefly because I was a member of the Labour Party, some of these not entirely guileless critics poured a torrent of abuse which my many obvious defects of character and capacity did not merit. The Labour Party principle of self-determination for the peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations was declared to be inviolable and universally applicable, whereas one of its members who was both a pedant and a traitor to its principles had suggested that in questions relating to finance and one or two other matters, the final word should under proper precautions be with the Government, and not with the people. It mattered nothing that the 'people' in the colony meant only 11,000 registered voters in a population of 86,000 adult males.

Before assenting to the proposal that reserved powers be given to the Government I had been careful to discuss with leading members of the Labour Party the hypothetical question of how far democratic principles would be prejudiced by such powers being conferred upon the Government, if they were accompanied by the franchise being so extended as to include the greater part of the adult male population, and I was encouraged to believe that under the special conditions of the colony such an arrangement was desirable. I therefore assented to the proposal that British Guiana should be taken out of the constitutional cul-de-sac in which it was placed, and that it should be put in the same position as other colonies in the empire, this being a necessary condition of economic and political development. When the report of the commissioners was published the angry colonists found little difficulty in persuading the Labour Party in the House of Commons to oppose any modification which was not based on 'the will of the people,' and when the question came before the House the whole

of the members of the party then present, excluding myself, but including those whose advice I had sought and taken, voted against the proposals we had made. The way of the constitution maker is notoriously a hard one!

I found the colony of British Guiana interesting, and its people both friendly and attractive, and I have no doubt that, under proper and efficient government, it will develop into a prosperous and happy community. I was deeply impressed with the beauty and majesty of the great primeval forests, with their giant greenheart trees, with the riot of foliage, and the unbelievable tangle of climbing parasitic growth. To be alone with these monsters of the forest is to feel the same sense of awe one experiences upon entering the doors of a great Gothic cathedral, and the glorious butterflies and birds completed a picture of beauty which is still a rare possession of my memory.

Our visit to the colony was made anxious by the severe illness of my colleague, Mr. Roy Wilson, and it was a great relief to me when he was sufficiently restored to health to return home. From him I received the greatest courtesy and consideration, and we were able to work together with complete harmony and cordiality. We were also received with the greatest courtesy by Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor of the colony, by Lady Rodwell, and by every section of the people of a most interesting country.

In the year 1927 I was invited to serve on a Departmental Committee which was formed under the chairmanship of the late Earl Buxton, to inquire into and report upon the whole question of pensions for colonial governors, owing to difficulties and anomalies which had arisen in connection with the government of the Mandated Territories. The committee made a series of recommendations which were accepted by the Government, and were in due course approved by Parliament.

Much of my parliamentary life, and many of my speeches in the House of Commons, were devoted to colonial and Indian affairs, but I attached special importance to a speech that I made on the Prayer Book Measure of 1928. Not being a member of the Church of England, my first impulse was not to seek to impose upon it rules which many of its adherents intensely disliked, but it became a settled thing in my mind that so long as the Church remained a State institution, under the protection of Parliament, every member of that Parliament had the right and the duty both to speak and to vote on such Church matters as came before it.

'I have believed in religious freedom more keenly and abidingly than in anything else in my life, and I would cut off my right hand rather than vote against the religious freedom of people who differ from myself. If the Church of England were a free and voluntary religious body, they would have the right, without coming to this House, to have what religion they please. But the Church is not a free body; it is the Church of England, and it represents the official religion of the nation. Its Prayer Book is of the nature of a State document, and, therefore, when it comes before us as members of Parliament, we are bound to give it the same serious, and I hope, unprejudiced, attention, that we should give to any other Bill or Order that came before us. . . . The Church has to select where she is going to stand. She may be free, but if she is not free she must be loyal. I want her to be a free Church among free churches. While the work of the State is too important to be interfered with by the Church, I believe also that the work of the Church is immensely too important to be interfered with by the State. Each in its place is best. The State has nothing to do with the teaching of religion. It can do wonderful things for our bodies, it can give us a beautiful environment, it can help us to make life beautiful and healthy in a material sense, but it never interferes with a man's soul except to its disadvantage.'¹

This speech attracted some attention, and it brought upon me the wrath of some of the clergy and churchmen in my constituency. The local Free Church Council on the other hand, and most of the nonconformist ministers in the district, appealed to me to speak and vote against the measure. They assured me that it was my duty, no matter what the cost might be to myself, to defend the faith of my fathers, and that in such a glorious cause it would be a privilege to be 'crucified.' I did not need these passionate calls to self-sacrifice; but I noted at the next general election, when clergymen were busy organizing the votes of churchmen against my candidature because of my action, that not one nonconformist chapel or minister gave me the smallest support.

When I became a member of Parliament my reading on religious and philosophical questions was, of sad necessity, seriously curtailed, but I jealously retained the habit of having on hand at least one book on these subjects as a refuge from blue books and parliamentary papers. Nevertheless, most of my systematic reading was done earlier. Any detailed statement concerning the influence

¹ *Hansard*, 13th June 1928.

upon my mind of the books that I read would be of little value, and I mention the titles of a few of them merely as indicating the sort of discipline that I imposed upon myself. I went carefully through the main economic text-books of the English and the American school—Cairnes, Marshall, Mill, Nicholson, Sidgwick, Ashley, Cunningham, Bonar, Ingram, and the Webbs. My reading in ethics included Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, Leslie Stephen's *Science of Ethics*, and Alexander's *Moral Order and Progress*. I also read some of the philosophical works of the German thinkers, notably those of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and, of course, the books of William James and Henri Bergson. My general reading, in addition to many books on religious questions, included Vinogradoff on *Villainage in England*, L. H. Morgan's *Ancient Society*, Sir Henry Maine's *Village Communities*, Thorold Rogers's *The Economic Interpretation of History*, Sir John Seeley's *The Expansion of England*, Lange's *History of Materialism*, and a considerable amount of general literature, including the works of Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, W. E. Lecky, Lord Morley, Mommsen, Gibbon, Grote, and Buckle. I saw *A Doll's House* when it was first produced in London, and I afterwards read all the works of Ibsen and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson that I could procure. Lest the reader should conclude from all this that I had no imagination I had better confess that my taste in light reading ran not to detective stories, but to the Wild West adventures of Zane Grey, Ridgwell Cullum, and others of their school.

CHAPTER XV

WORK IN PARLIAMENT

Thy purpose firm, is equal to the deed:
Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly; angels could no more.

YOUNG, *Night Thoughts*.

TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN members of the Labour Party were returned at the general election in 1929. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was for the second time invited to form a Government, and he agreed to do so, notwithstanding the fact that his followers were again a minority in the House of Commons. The question whether it was expedient to undertake the responsibilities of Government in these circumstances was not submitted to the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party for their decision; but many of them were opposed to the adventure. In their judgment every day's experience of the previous attempt of the party to govern as a minority was a warning against assuming office before the party was in a position to carry out its own policy. The leaders of the party were, however, once more tempted to place their necks in a noose by which they and their followers could be strangled, whenever it pleased the Liberal Party to develop homicidal tendencies. Mr. Lloyd George was throughout engagingly frank about his intentions; he would tolerate the Government for just so long as it did nothing in particular; but should it ever attempt to carry out its own party programme he would at once butcher it to make a Liberal holiday. Modern capitalism was to be preserved at all costs.

The experiences of the second Labour Government were in no way different from those of the first. It could not adopt a policy such as would have satisfied its own members, who were consequently deeply and frequently humiliated by the necessity of having to vote against their convictions. The Government had to emasculate its measures, and accept amendments which still further reduced their political significance, and the hearts of the members of the party were slowly but surely broken. The justification for

the first Labour Government was adequate, for it was advisable at all costs to demonstrate to the country that such a Government could be formed; but there was no justification whatever for the second venture, which was apparently entered upon only because the leaders of the party could not resist the temptation once again to attempt the impossible. 'Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition: By that sin fell the angels.'

Thorns and thistles appeared in the Labour field almost as soon as the crop was sown, for the two oppositions once again began the old congenial task of goading and defaming the Labour ministers, and of taunting the members of the party with incapacity and cowardice. Mr. Baldwin had helped to lure the Socialist fly into the capitalist web by his promise to abstain from 'factious opposition,' but while a few of the Tory front bench occupants observed this undertaking, back-bench terriers were encouraged perpetually to snap and snarl at the Government's heels. Without reproof from their leaders they sought, with incredible meanness, to wound the Prime Minister by calling the attention of Parliament to the fact that, in order to enable him to return from a country engagement in time to attend a national thanksgiving service after the severe illness of his Majesty the King, '*he had used a service machine instead of hiring a private aeroplane.*'¹ These 'gentlemen of England' had got the Labour Party precisely where they wanted it, with its arms tied helplessly behind its back.

When the first session of the Parliament began the Prime Minister generously asked me to propose that the customary 'humble Address' be presented to his Majesty, for his 'gracious Speech,' and the question immediately arose as to whether, under a Labour Government, the established custom of wearing court dress or uniform should be honoured by the proposer and seconder. Considerable pressure was put upon me to conform with ancient tradition, but my mind was definitely against doing so and, although the Government had left the matter entirely to my own choice, I informed the chief whip that, if by appearing in ordinary morning dress I should embarrass the Government, I would gladly give way to any one with a less marked puritanical bias. This apparently trivial matter aroused general interest. Newspapers gave contradictory accounts of what I intended to wear, and I jokingly informed inquirers that I proposed to appear in shorts and a red tie. But so far as I remember no one thought of asking what I intended

¹ *Hansard*, 10th July 1929.

to say. The British constitution did not, however, appear to suffer when I appeared in morning dress.

The House received my speech on this occasion with great generosity, and it was perhaps the most successful pronouncement of my political career. The mover of the Address has an exceptionally difficult task to perform. 'I have to forgo all the delights of controversy and of political vituperation, and restrict my remarks to a few unprovocative generalities and to a dull impartiality—a restriction which will win for me, I am sure, the sympathy of every ardent controversialist in the House.'¹ I commented upon the recent illness of the king, on the problem of unemployment, and in conclusion I pleaded for an earnest attempt to increase goodwill between England and the United States of America. 'Nothing would be more welcome to the people of both countries than that their common genius should be pooled for the purpose of arriving at an abiding and blessed peace. The American people are in great part our kinsmen. Their roots are very deeply set in our national soil. They belong to our civilization, and they are very conscious of it. Their claims in this respect have been put into imperishable words by one of the most lovable of New England poets:

O Englishmen, in hope and creed,
And blood and tongue, our brothers,
We, too, are heirs of Runnymede;
And Shakespeare's fame and Cromwell's deed
Are not alone our Mother's.

'They claim a partnership in our great British traditions. They look with affection on the ancient home of their race, as we look with pride on their young and well-used strength. And the enlightened people of both nations desire no greater blessing in their time than that, henceforth, the broad Atlantic should become no longer a barrier but a bridge, no longer a sea of possible strife and trouble, but a free ferry, for the free peoples of a world at peace.'²

Members of all parties were most generous in their approval of this speech. Mr. Lloyd George and many others spoke to me about it in the kindest terms. *The Times* referred to its 'admirable tone,' and stated that I had 'conformed to, and even improved upon, tradition in everything except that I had worn an ordinary frock coat instead of court dress.' The *Evening News* remarked that

¹ *Hansard*, 2nd July 1929.

² *Ibid.*



AT THE WHITE HOUSE: BERNARD DEUTSCH,
PRESIDENT HOOVER, AND MYSELF

'the Labour Party scored a distinct hit yesterday, and the scorer was Mr. Snell. His speech was the best speech on the humble Address that the House has listened to for many a year,' while another paper said that 'Mr. Snell . . . spoke with modest dignity, and with that mastery of literary expression which he has taught the House to expect from him. Rarely, if ever, has the mover been so loudly cheered at the finish as Mr. Snell was. He deserved the ovation, for he spoke not in the style of a political lackey, but in a statesmanlike manner, both with vision and authority.'

One of the first acts of the Labour Party on its assumption of office was again to appoint a consultative committee, to act as a liaison body between the cabinet and the members of the party. Nominations were received by the secretary of the Parliamentary Party, Mr. H. Scott Lindsay, who in due course issued ballot papers with the names of those who had been nominated to all the members of the party. When they were returned, and it was found that the largest number of votes was attached to my name, my colleagues unanimously elected me as their chairman, a position that I retained until I ceased to be a member of the House.

The consultative committee was called upon to deal with matters of great importance to the welfare of the Labour Party and to the country, and these duties demanded from them constant attention, rare understanding; and unfailing tact. The Labour Parliamentary Party contained many new members, most of whom possessed a fine quality of enthusiasm, which was unrestrained by parliamentary experience. The first months of parliamentary life are without doubt the most trying to those who come new to the service of the House. 'In his own locality' the new member 'may have been the big noise, but here he will not count. He perhaps expected to find himself addressing a crowded House of spell-bound legislators, or he may have dreamed of the legislative trophies that he would take home to his constituents. Alas! the reality is so different from the anticipation. He finds himself to be a mere cog in the wheel of a vast and complicated machine, which turns him, but which he cannot turn. Depression follows exhilaration; but if he is made of the right stuff he will work steadily, wait patiently, learn the routine of his job, and play the game.'¹

One of the first difficulties that the consultative committee had

¹ *Daily Life in Parliament.*

to face was the restlessness of the new members, who quickly discovered that the necessary day-to-day team work of the party required from them a degree of self-suppression to which they had been unaccustomed, and which grew increasingly irksome. The party whips wished them to remain silent when they wanted to speak; to keep them in attendance at the House when they keenly desired to leave; and to compel them to vote for things that they intensely disliked.

The party as a whole became unceasingly alarmed at the ever-increasing figures of unemployment, and the constant efforts that had to be made to revive their drooping spirits, to dispel their doubts, and to keep them in good heart, involved, for the members of the consultative committee, hourly labour and infinite patience. Upon myself as their chairman, and, in consequence, chairman of the Parliamentary Party, the strain was particularly heavy. Every member of the party who had either a project or a protest, wanted it to be given pride of place, and to have it considered without delay. The Conservative Party in that same Parliament considered it an almost indecent concession to the modern spirit when, after a period of seven years, they took the vulgar step of holding a party meeting; but the Labour Party held at least one, and frequently two, each week.

The responsibility attaching to the duties of the chairman were not light; the work absorbed the greater part of my parliamentary time, and it gave me some experience in the difficult business of leading men. Many sudden, and sometimes serious, crises had to be dealt with, and quick and firm decisions on the part of the chairman were frequently required; but as ever in dealing with men of sincere convictions, a tolerant mind and a readiness to exploit the fun that was seldom absent from our meetings proved the surest way to preserve unity and to further the common aim.

It is far less easy to satisfy a disgruntled and closely organized group of men who think that they alone are right, than it is to comfort a fretful or disappointed individual. The members of the 'Clyde-side' group of the Parliamentary Party were never without a grievance; and they could never be appeased. They had not the slightest sense of team work, and their sole method of getting 'Socialism in our time' was to try to embarrass the only political party that aimed to get it at any time. The Labour Government was accused, both in the party meetings and in the constituencies, of betraying the Socialist movement, and of apostasy

to the programme laid down in *Labour and the Nation*; and they habitually sought to snatch spurious victories for their proposals, by designedly waiting until the bells of the House were summoning members to the House for prayers (the party meetings assembled at 1.45 p.m., and prayers were at 2.45 p.m.), and then to spring upon the meeting carefully planned resolutions which, had they been passed, would have embarrassed both the party and the Government. The chairman was not, however, without experience in the arts of political manoeuvre, and in no case did the 'clean Socialists' secure more than a mere handful of votes.

The next contribution of the irreconcilables towards getting 'Socialism in our time' was to carry on to the floor of the House of Commons the proposals they could not induce their colleagues to accept in the party meetings, and their amendments and resolutions were usually pressed to a division, for the apparent purpose of providing material for denouncing in the constituencies the loyal members of the party, who did not support them. The Tory and Liberal parties quite naturally gave to these party rebels every possible encouragement. The cartoonists and the journalists of the capitalist press gave them the publicity they desired. Liberal and Tory members in the House of Commons assured them that they were great fellows; a tribute which was so much in accordance with their own convictions, that they 'fell for it,' and purred like petted cats. They studiously and continuously isolated themselves from their Labour colleagues, and found more agreeable company.

The sincerity of these difficult members of the party was never questioned by any one, and there were few among them whose character did not command respect. Most of them had given long and valuable service to the Socialist movement, and both their work and their devotion to it were beyond all cavil. But they were in essence political individualists, and in so far as they considered their own convenience before the needs of the party, they were bad colleagues. They believed themselves to be moved by principle; whereas they were really the victims of pride. They could not play the game. What, for the sake of the Labour Party, others had to endure, they would not have. The immaculate purity of their Socialist consciences was not to be fouled by such base contacts and compromises as others had to make. They were good fellows, all of them. They were mostly delightful as friends, sincere, clean-living, sober, industrious, and incorruptible; but they permitted themselves to be flattered by people who used and

despised them. As players in the party team they would do everything except pass the ball.

The consultative committee had considerable trouble with Sir Oswald Mosley and his ineffective retinue. Mosley appeared to have been favoured by the gods; and a great future for him within the Labour Party was taken for granted. He was a rich man, and, in addition, he had youth, education, and a great natural capacity. Had he also possessed even a reasonable share of personal humility, and the necessary self-discipline, he might have become the leader of a great constitutional party; but those qualities were precisely what he lacked. He was too impatient for recognition, too egocentric, and too conscious of the power of money. He entered the Labour Party with the light of a great enthusiasm about him, and he spent both money and energy with an almost profligate unconcern. For a time he was as a burning bush which was not consumed; but when disappointment overtook him, the fire within him cooled, until at the end only a few cold ashes remained.

I never personally shared the view of some of his critics, that Mosley was merely a calculating and unscrupulous careerist, although he was always very conscious of his own importance. I then regarded him as a young, but not ignoble, adventurer, who had not found his life's work, and I believed that should he ever do so, he would make his contribution to the service of the State. As a leader of revolt within the Labour Party he was altogether ridiculous. He was at once too inexperienced to know how far he could safely go, and also too self-satisfied to take advice. He could never be made to see that the anxiety of the Labour members concerning the question of unemployment did not mean that they would vote against their own Government, and when, refusing all advice, he insisted on pushing his censorious motions to a division, and got less than thirty votes among the nearly three hundred members of the party, his cup of bitterness overflowed. I did not know Mosley well, but I admired his gifts and his courage, and I believed that if ever he discovered his proper place in life he would give an honourable account of himself.

The problem of unemployment dogged the footsteps of the Labour Government from the day it was formed and, as the chairman of the consultative committee, I frequently tried to interview Mr. J. H. Thomas, the Lord Privy Seal, who had been entrusted with the thankless task of trying to solve it. Mr. Thomas had my

complete sympathy, for, as an economic student, I knew that nothing that either he or the Government could do would seriously modify a situation that was beyond their control. He did his best within his powers, and he did not merit all the attacks that were made upon him. He was a skilled negotiator, and had economic facts been railway directors, he would have achieved greater success; and if he could have seen the advantage of being a little more accessible to the chairman and the members of the consultative committee, who could then have helped to guide the mind of the party meetings, some of his difficulties might have been overcome.

The ministers with whom the committee were in closest contact were Mr. J. R. Clynes, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whose speeches always seemed to me to be bigger than himself, and Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, inasmuch as they frequently attended its meetings in an advisory capacity. Clynes had an almost unrivalled acquaintance with organized labour on the industrial side, and Henderson's experience of the Labour forces throughout the country was beyond comparison. Clynes helped to simplify the most difficult problems by succinct and clear phrases, while Henderson's frankness left no one in doubt as to what he felt and desired. Robust in expression, a little prone to carry any disputed point by verbal assault, he was quickly roused to wrath, but was even more quickly composed. He was always approachable, always reliable, and considerate in his judgments, sometimes a little more like 'Uncle Mussolini' than the 'Uncle Arthur' who was the revered friend of us all.

During the two years that I acted as the chairman of the Parliamentary Party I tried to revive the spirits of the depressed, to comfort those who were disappointed, and to keep the party machine running with efficiency if not with smoothness. I was the habitual shock-absorber of the party, and I saved ministers from more trouble than they were aware of. My work as the chairman was splendidly aided by Mr. Scott Lindsay, the secretary of the party, whose competence and helpfulness had won for him the regard of both that and previous Parliaments. I had the greatest personal regard for all the members over whose deliberations I presided, and not least for those of the troublesome minority. Taking them man for man they were the equals in capacity of those of the other parties in the House. They had both the qualities and the shortcomings of their class; they were at once stubborn and generous, impatient

and loyal, tough-minded and emotional, and they were as straight and clean as a drawn sword. To have won their trust and regard was a sufficient reward for any man.

As I have felt it necessary in the course of this narrative to criticize the newspaper Press for its ready servility to the prejudices of the possessing classes, I wish with all appropriate emphasis to express my respect and admiration for the gifted journalists who, in the lobby of the House, perform with such conspicuous credit to themselves and their profession the very difficult duties entrusted to them. They were all of them among my friends, with whom I talked more or less freely on many questions, but I never knew any of them to abuse a confidence or to exploit a private conversation. Their capacity to track a rumour to its source, or hunt down a political story, would make amateurs of the proved experts of Scotland Yard. The greatest tribute to their fine sense of responsibility is that only rarely have their victims felt themselves unjustly treated. They represent British journalism at its best:

You cannot hope to bribe or twist,
Thank God, the British journalist,
But seeing what unbribed he'll do,
There's really no occasion to.

I imagine that all men have their little vanities, and I confess that I was gratified to receive, soon after the general election of 1929, an invitation from Mr. Speaker to serve on the small panel of temporary Chairmen of Committees of the whole House, in the absence of the appointed chairman or his deputy, and I retained that honourable position up to the time when I ceased to be a member. The Mother of Parliaments is one of the most courteous and dignified legislative assemblies in the world, and the chairman of its committees invariably receives from it the most loyal support. The late Sir Thomas Lonsdale Webster, the Clerk of the House, was a strict believer in enforcing the rules which govern the debates, and once when an ex-cabinet-minister was quite clearly irrelevant he desired me to interrupt and call him to order; but I decided that what the right hon. gentleman was saying was probably quite as helpful as anything he would have been likely to say within the rules, and I let him proceed unconscious of my consideration for him.

In the month of July 1929 I was appointed the chairman of a committee which had been formed by the Colonial Office under the previous Government 'to examine the arrangements existing for

the supply, censorship, and exhibition of cinematograph films for public exhibition in the Colonies, Protectorates, and Mandated Territories, and to consider in what way these arrangements could be improved with special reference to the following points: (1) The desirability of developing the use of the cinematograph as an instrument of education in the widest sense, not only in the schools but also among adults; (2) the advisability on political as well as economic grounds of encouraging the supply and exhibition of British films, including such as have distinct educational value; and (3) the desirability of securing everywhere an efficient censorship of films with a view to the exclusion from exhibition of any that are unsuitable or demoralizing.' The type of film which was then being exhibited throughout the Colonial Empire was such as to cause the greatest anxiety to every one concerned with the welfare of native populations. These films were mostly of foreign origin, and they were frequently deplorable both in quality and in taste. Pictures dealing with sex-disloyalty and showing half-dressed women and drunken men in night clubs and worse places, were shown to African and other native peoples as representing life among the whites who rule over them, and incalculable harm was being done. The Holly-wooden-heads who produced and distributed these odious pictures were free—for 'business is business,' and must not be interfered with—to demoralize the more or less childlike minds of those who saw them. We were fortunate in having as members of the committee expert English film producers, whose advice was of great assistance, and the report which we presented in July 1930 (Cmd. 3630) was unanimous, except for a reservation on the question of censorship by Sir Hesketh Bell, and I very much hope that its recommendations will do something towards removing a very serious danger.

Parliamentary life during this period placed such an exceptional strain upon my energies that general reading and serious study had to be suspended. I was a member of the Imperial Economic Committee, and I helped in the work of producing several of its reports. The late Lord Thompson, the Minister for Air, and an old personal friend, also invited me to serve on the Civil Aviation Committee which he had appointed, and while engaged on this work I saw a good deal of the late General Sir Sefton Brancker, who several times invited me to accompany him on various flights. The opportunity to do so, however, never occurred. On the last occasion that he pressed a journey upon me he assured me that

'flying was far safer than walking,' and a few days afterwards he perished, together with Lord Thompson, and nearly all of those who were in the ill-fated R 101, which came down in flames at Beauvais in France. The unidentified remains of her victims were laid in state in Westminster Hall where, each coffin being covered with a British flag, they presented as grim a picture of tragedy as those ancient walls had ever seen.

I was also greatly interested in the work of the Committee on Education in the Colonies. I was a member of the Sessional Indian Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, and I served for some time, at the request of Mr. Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the official side of the National Whitley Council, which dealt with civil service questions. In addition to these duties, and the daily labour connected with a heavy London constituency, I had to organize the weekly studies of the Labour Commonwealth Group, to find time to prepare Sunday lectures, and to act as the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the League of Nations Union. Yet there are those who think it smart to assert, before audiences which are even more ignorant than themselves, that the life of a member of Parliament is one of comfortable dignity and indolent repose.

On the 31st August 1929, while I was on holiday at Eastbourne, I received from Lord Passfield, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a letter which stated that the Prime Minister and himself desired me to become a member of a small commission which the Government proposed to send to Palestine to inquire into the causes of the riots which had occurred in Jerusalem and other places, and which had resulted in the death of more than a hundred Jews and many Arabs. As it was proposed that the commission should start almost at once I returned to London in order to make the necessary arrangements; but owing to the desire of the Jewish authorities to be represented by counsel, there was some delay, and we did not start on our journey until the 12th October. My colleagues were Sir Walter Shaw, a retired colonial judge (chairman), Sir Henry Betterton, Bt., C.B.E., M.P. (now Lord Rushcliffe), who was accompanied by Lady Betterton, Mr. R. Hopkin Morris, M.P., and Mr. T. I. K. Lloyd of the Colonial Office, who acted as our secretary. When I agreed to serve on the commission it was not proposed that its deliberations should be of a judicial nature, and the subsequent decision to allow the various parties to be represented by counsel, with the right to tender and cross-



Armenian Colony Photo Dept., Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, 1929: WITH SIR WALTER SHAW, SIR HENRY BETTERTON (NOW LORD RUSHCLIFFE),
AND MR. HOPKIN MORRIS, M.P.

examine witnesses, placed me at a serious disadvantage. I alone among the commissioners was without legal training, and it was only at the combined request of my colleagues that I did not retire at that point. I afterwards sincerely regretted that I had not done so.

My work in connection with the Palestine Commission of Enquiry was, I think, the most thrilling event of my life, and I shall always regard my visit to the Holy Land as a rare and rich experience. The intelligent traveller from a Western land, who visits Palestine for the first time, always provided that he has some knowledge of its history, and possesses an alert imagination, cannot fail to be deeply impressed by what he sees. Thoughts and feelings are aroused in him which, notwithstanding his modern outlook and social training, move him powerfully and surprisingly. All kinds of hidden emotions assert themselves, some of them with a force which challenges his settled intellectual judgments. That at least was my personal experience. There was first of all the thrill of being able to see with my own eyes the hills and valleys of a land about which I had read and thought even more than about my own country, a land associated with the racial history of a great people, and with the main sources of the Christian religion. What I saw was all so new and yet so strangely familiar—it was almost like meeting someone not seen for many years. There were times when I felt that I must have been there before. I had heard of Mount Zion, Mount Carmel, and the Mount of Olives before I had heard of the hills and valleys of my native land, and in imagination I had walked on them a thousand times. The names of many of the towns and villages that I visited were as well known to me as were those of Kent or Surrey, and my imagination played upon the events that had rendered immortal the lakes and valleys that I visited.

And the people of the Holy Land were of surpassing interest. The young shepherd that I met upon the road might have been the boy David engaged in the task of tending his father's flocks; and that camel-driver looked much as the youthful Muhammad must have appeared in his day, while the old man in his coloured tunic, slinking in the shadows on his way to the Wailing Wall, resembled closely a Jewish patriarch of ancient Jerusalem. Mental pictures of this kind were not entirely fanciful, for the native people have not substantially altered since the days of Herod, and their dress and habits have withstood most of the assaults of time. The

twentieth century has overtaken and surprised them; but it has not greatly changed them; and when the traveller listens to the chatter of the women round the village well, he sees them much as they were when the servant of Abraham took his master's camels to the well, where Rebecca, a damsel who was 'very fair to look upon,' filled her pitcher, and gave drink to him and to his camels also.

The first great difficulty that I had to overcome was to adjust my mind to the unexpected smallness of the picture, and to reduce imaginative scales to realities. Was this the cockpit in which such mighty events had occurred? The framework of the land seemed to be too small for the story it had to tell. Palestine itself is not much bigger than the Principality of Wales, or about the size of the State of Massachusetts. The famous brook Kishon, which swept away Sisera and his hosts, proved to be an insignificant stream, while Mount Zion was even less conspicuous than is Primrose Hill. The general desolation of the land suggested a sepulchre, rather than the cradle of a new life.

The commissioners had been instructed 'to inquire into the immediate causes which had led to the recent outbreak in Palestine, and to make recommendations as to the steps necessary to avoid a recurrence,' and on arriving in Jerusalem on the 24th October, after making a formal call upon the High Commissioner, his Excellency Sir John Chancellor, they, on the same day, began their work. The parties to the inquiry were the Palestine Government, represented by Mr. Kenelm Freedy, K.C., and the Arab Executive, represented by Mr. W. H. Stoker, K.C., while the Palestine Zionist Executive were represented by Sir Boyd Merriman, K.C., M.P., and Lord Erleigh, and the leading counsel in each case were assisted by several juniors. The commissioners held nearly sixty sessions, took the evidence of one hundred and thirty witnesses, and the report which they presented on the 12th March 1930¹ aroused world-wide comment and much hostile criticism. The Zionist leaders and organizations throughout the world immediately denounced it as ill-informed, inaccurate, and biased, while the Arab politicians rejoiced exceedingly.

I had the misfortune to arrive at conclusions concerning the evidence which was presented to us, which my colleagues did not share, and it was my plain duty to maintain those conclusions by a long note of reservation to the majority report. I have already

¹ *Report of Commission*, Cmd. 5350.

indicated that I was at a disadvantage in comparison with my colleagues, inasmuch as I alone was not a lawyer; but I had not the slightest doubt as to the soundness of my own judgments, nor as to my duty in regard to them. It was a miserable business to have to dissociate myself from the views and decisions of colleagues with whom I had worked with complete cordiality throughout our long and anxious inquiries. They were invariably kind to me, and the sincerity of their judgments was, in my mind, beyond all question. But they did not see the problem as I saw it, and I could not reconcile my conclusions with those associated with their names. I took a more serious view than they did of the responsibility of the Arab and Moslem leaders for the campaign of incitement which had preceded and, as I believed, provoked the disturbances, and I had no doubt in my mind that the fears and passions of the Arab people had been awakened and inflamed for purely political ends.

My colleagues knew far more about legal casuistry than I did, but I was at least able to recognize a political manoeuvre when I met one face to face. There had been, as one would expect, provocative actions and foolish advocacy on both sides. The Jews had carried too far their claims in regard to the Wailing Wall on the Day of Atonement in 1928, and the Arab Nationalists retaliated with a campaign of incitement against the Jews, which was required, as was stated in the note of reservation, 'less by the needs of the Moslem religion and the rights of property than by the studied desire to provoke and wound the religious susceptibilities of the Jewish people.'

My most serious disagreement with the conclusions of my colleagues was in regard to the difficult problem of land settlement and emigration. The Arab case against Jewish settlement was (1) that there was an ascertained number of acres of cultivable land available in the country; (2) that a recognized number of acres was required to sustain an Arab cultivator and his family; and (3) that these acres had previously been cultivated by Arabs who were being expropriated in order to make room for Jewish settlers. It was alleged that, in Nazareth, and elsewhere, considerable numbers of such dispossessed Arab cultivators were living in a state of complete destitution. These statements influenced my colleagues far more than myself. I had been a farm worker, and almost every field that I saw indicated to my mind that the Arab method of cultivation was primitive and wasteful. The land was

not being ploughed; it was being merely tickled and annoyed. The problem, as I saw it, was in the first case one of efficient cultivation: 'the present population does not approach the limit which the country can maintain . . . the Jewish demand, in fact, rests upon the assumption that by more intensive cultivation and the reclaiming of areas now derelict, sufficient land could be made available for the needs of both races for many years to come.' I was also unable to associate myself with the criticism made by my colleagues of the Jewish method of dealing with emigration certificates, for this seemed to me not to be in accordance with evidence which had been placed before them.

The Zionist is frequently so enthusiastic concerning his cause as to become inconsiderate. Thus, a good deal of criticism was later directed to the fact that I had signed the main report, and that I was therefore committed to its proposals. This criticism was not wholly unjust. There were many things in the report with which I thoroughly agreed, some of which my colleagues had accepted at my earnest request, and it is always difficult, if not unfair, to accept concessions from colleagues whose general findings you propose to reject. In actual fact my note of reservation, if read carefully, will be seen to be of the nature of a minority report, and it was written with that intention. For reasons which cannot be dealt with here, it was decided within twenty-four hours of the report being formally forwarded to the Government, to present it in the form in which it appeared. When this decision was made I wrote to the Secretary of State saying that 'I have to-day with very great reluctance and misgiving signed the main report of the Palestine Commission of Enquiry. This course has involved compressing my thoughts on the problem into a smaller compass, and excluding things that were all right in a separate report, but out of place in a note of reservations. The result is to take most of the steam from behind what I wanted to say, and I, in consequence, venture to hope that in reading my note appended to the report you will not take less notice of what is there implied than would have been the case had I presented a formal minority report.'

My view of the Palestinian problem was extensively criticized from the Arab side, and Major Polson Newman, perhaps the ablest of the pro-Arab advocates in England, thought it necessary to say that my opinions were based upon party considerations, because 'the Jewish vote is much sought after by the Labour Party,'

and that they 'bore the stamp of the Zionist organization.' In actual fact no Jew in the world had spoken to me about it, and no one outside the members of the commission knew what my opinions concerning the problem were. So far as the Labour Party was concerned, it is sufficient to say that the opinions I expressed were my own, and that they were not for sale. The Labour Government did not, in fact, adopt my view, but that of my colleagues; but I had later the satisfaction of knowing that my outlook was supported, not only by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, but also, after months of anxious consideration, implicitly by the Government itself, in the letter which the Prime Minister wrote on the 13th February 1931 to Dr. Chaim Weizmann.

Although our duties kept us almost continuously in Jerusalem, I nevertheless managed to see many most interesting things, and on Sunday mornings, while my more orthodox colleagues were at church, I was conducted through the Holy City by Mr. Keith Roach, the Deputy Governor of Jerusalem, who genially allowed me to describe him as 'Pontius Pilate the Third.'

Jerusalem is a fascinating city; it is rich in historical interest, and sordid beyond belief in the religious and racial hatreds which fill and disgrace it. 'Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following,' wrote the Psalmist; but he could not have dreamed of what Jerusalem would become. The city that he knew was not, of course, the one that we now see: that lies below the streets on which we walk, and it is useless to look for traces of the things that Jesus saw in the streets and squares of this eleven-times-captured place. Romans, Persians, Greeks, Saracens, Crusaders, Egyptians, and Turks have ravaged and despoiled it, and to-day it is crowded with mosques, synagogues, churches, monasteries, convents, and religious orders, which add neither to its dignity nor to its tranquillity.

The Moslem Dome of the Rock in the Temple Area is incomparably the most beautiful building that Jerusalem contains, and I was grateful to his Eminence the Mufti of Jerusalem, for his kindness in allowing me to visit it in his company. This Moslem shrine, with the Mosque of Aksa which almost adjoins it, conveys a sense of unity and a dignified peace which is entirely absent from the Christian ecclesiastical buildings in the city. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre should be the most sacred and tranquil place in the Christian world; it is almost the most depressing and humiliating thing in Jerusalem. A noisy rabble of hungry sects

defile it with their quarrels and their business claims. Nearly everything in Jerusalem which is traditionally associated with the name of 'the Prince of Peace' is commercialized and turned to profit; and religious exercises cannot be held on the spot where He is reputed to have died that man might live, except under the control and protection of the police. The whole atmosphere of the place filled me with a savage rage, and I felt that, although I belonged to no Church that bore His name, I was, even so, perhaps nearer to Him than were the pious zealots whose hatred and avarice made Christianity, in Jerusalem, a sordid and grasping business. Were I the world's dictator the text which should be placed above the door of the church which covers the spot on which He is said to have died, would read: 'He is not here: He is risen.'

The Jerusalem which is rising outside the walls of the old city helps to comfort one's outraged spirit: it is part of the Jerusalem which is to be. New districts are being developed; there are wide streets, modern buildings, and luxurious hotels, with comforts such as 'Solomon in all his glory' never knew. The view of the city from the Mount of Olives is both superb and moving, while eastwards may be seen the purple contours of the hills of Moab, and the deep chasm through which, 4,000 feet below, runs the silver ribbon of the Jordan River. The place where Jeremiah the prophet resided is also within sight, and not far away is the village of Bethany, the home of Lazarus, of Martha and Mary. Sir Henry and Lady Betterton and myself spent one glorious Saturday afternoon with this inspiring picture, and I remember trying to reduce the temperature of my emotions, by teasingly insisting that Jerusalem would not have met with disaster if Baldwin, its king, had been a strong man. This saucy reference to a deeply respected friend of us both, who was then engaged in fighting a battle of his own, caused Sir Henry to raise a friendly fist, and the merry incident helped to restore my own balance of mind.

It was delightful to be able to get away for a week-end from Jerusalem, and the territory of the fighting kings. We spent one night at the monastery on the top of Mount Carmel, and we went to Nazareth, and to the peaceful and beautiful Sea of Galilee. It was a great experience. On Christmas Eve, the Bettertons and myself, accompanied by Sergeant Parker and Corporal Pringle of the Palestine Police, who were our official protectors, and to whom every member of the commission was greatly indebted, paid a never-to-be-forgotten visit to Bethlehem; and guided by a charming

and resourceful Arab boy, we went first of all to the 'shepherd's field,' over which the stars shone as when the shepherds had 'watched their flocks by night,' and had seen the star which directed their steps towards a stable where, because there 'was no room at the inn,' the Son of Man had been born. Afterwards we attended the service at the Church of the Nativity. The Protestants of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood were, on this occasion, allowed to sing carols in the courtyard. They were for the most part British people, and the singing was almost the worst that I had ever heard. It was, however, made impressive by the place and the time. To me, at least, the event was strangely moving. We were on the traditional spot on which Jesus had first opened his eyes upon the world; it was Christmas Eve; the stars were shining over our heads, and we were away from home. There were also other considerations which influenced me. Inside the great church the approved sects of His followers were celebrating the anniversary of His birth, with the police present to prevent them from leaping for each other's throats. I could not sing; I wanted to cry and curse, but, so far as I could observe, the orthodox Christians who were present were as little moved by their surroundings as they would have been in the Caledonian Market.

Emotions of this kind are not dependent upon the intellect. I was moved by these traditional centres of the Christian faith, but I was not convinced by them. Their value, for me, was purely imaginative, not historical or even religious. They were of secondary rather than of primary importance. I left Palestine a day or two later feeling greatly privileged to be associated with even one incident in its great story, but also reinforced in my belief that 'not in this mountain nor in Jerusalem,' not in this mosque or that synagogue or church, will unity and peace be found. For that desired end the world must wait until men of all beliefs and lands put love of the beautiful, the true, and the good before the creeds which anger and divide them.

The year 1930 was one of increasing difficulty for the Labour Government, which was attacked from every quarter of the House for its failure to solve the problem of unemployment. In addition, it had to meet a revolt of the Catholic members of the Labour Party over the questions of birth control and education. When Sir Charles Trevelyan's Education Bill was introduced, they sought in the opinion of their colleagues to make it serve, in an inequitable degree, the special interests of their Church, and they contemptuously

rejected every proposal for compromise which was put before them. The impression that they created during this controversy was that they were not the masters of their own minds, and that their ultimate allegiance was not either to their party or to the nation, but to their Church. The late Mr. John Scurr, M.P., frequently intensified this impression, by stating at the meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party, over which I presided, that he and his Catholic colleagues could not modify their demands without the approval of the 'hierarchy' of their Church. On one occasion when this statement was made, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who was sitting by my side, whispered to me: 'Harry, what does your hierarchy say?'—to which question I gave the adequate reply: 'I am it.'

The conditions under which Catholic members of the Labour Party performed their parliamentary duties may be judged by the pressure which the same 'hierarchy' sought to put upon non-Catholic members. Let me illustrate this from my own experience. The priest of one of the Catholic churches in the area that I represented, wrote to me demanding that I should 'vote for the amendment which postpones the coming into operation of the Education Bill, until financial assistance out of public funds is given to non-provided schools,' and stated without equivocation that should I not do so 'the Catholics of Plumstead will seriously consider the continuance of their support for your membership at the next election.' I stated in my reply to him that what he demanded that I should do was, in effect, 'to deprive every child throughout the country of the age affected of the chance of an extended education until the financial claims of the Catholic Church had been conceded. . . . At the time that I write this letter [20th January 1931] I do not know what the Government is likely to advise Parliament to do on this matter, but the issue raised by your letter is clear, and it requires an immediate reply. The Catholic voters in the East Woolwich Division will rightly decide for themselves how they shall vote at the next election, but I should dishonour both myself and my constituents if I permitted myself to be intimidated by the threat that you think it right to make on their behalf.' His reverence had, on this occasion, mistaken his man. I would have left public life altogether, rather than have become the ordered menial of either the Catholic or any other Church. The Amendment was in due course moved by Mr. Scurr. It was forced to a division, and carried, and the Bill was killed.

CHAPTER XVI

ON BECOMING A PEER

A man may speak very well in the House of Commons, and fail very completely in the House of Lords. There are two distinct styles requisite; I intend in the course of my career, if I have time, to give a specimen of both.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI.

EARLY in the month of March 1931 the Empire Parliamentary Association was invited by the French Comité Franco-Britannique d'Études Coloniales, to send one or two of its members to Paris, to explain to that body the main principles and methods of British Colonial administration. The association honoured me by asking me to prepare a paper on '*les méthodes d'administration et de gouvernement dans les colonies anglaises et françaises*,' which was read to a meeting of French colonial students and administrators, presided over by M. François-Marsal. Following the reading of the paper many searching questions were asked concerning British colonial methods, and these were answered by Mr. A. A. Somerville, M.P., the Conservative member for Windsor, and by Sir Howard D'Egville, the secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association, who were my fellow-delegates. The meeting was of an experimental nature, but it was at once agreed that the advantage to be derived from friendly contacts of the students of colonial administration of both countries was so great that arrangements should be made for additional meetings to be held, either in Paris or in London.

Mr. Somerville and myself returned to London on Sunday, 8th March, and the following Wednesday evening I was informed by Mr. Arthur Henderson that the Prime Minister wished me to call on him the next morning at ten o'clock, to discuss with him the proposal that I should become the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India, which had become vacant through the death of the late Earl Russell. I had not received any previous intimation that my name was being considered, and, as it was necessary that I should give immediate and adequate attention to all that the proposal involved for me before I saw the Prime Minister

I got leave of absence from the House for the remainder of the evening in order that I might give to it undisturbed reflection. Personal, as well as party, issues had to be considered. I knew that if I agreed to accept office I should have to leave the House of Commons, where I had valued friends in all parties, who had been generously kind to me, and also that my friends in Woolwich would be put to the expense and inconvenience of a by-election.

I had never sought office in any way. I would not have asked the Government to pass to me the salt; and my position as chairman of the consultative committee was one of responsible dignity. On the other hand I knew that I was working far beyond my strength, and I remembered the advice given by the late Lord Haldane, that the House of Commons was not a suitable place for men over sixty. It would be foolish of me to pretend that I was not emotionally affected by the confidence of the Prime Minister, and the recognition that he was willing to give to my work. I tried to think the whole matter out throughout a sleepless night, and when I saw the Prime Minister at the appointed time the next morning, after I had assured him that I had no desire to hold office, I told him that I would place myself at his disposal. My interview with Mr. MacDonald was entirely frank and friendly, and it was agreed that, subject to the approval of his Majesty the King, I should become the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India, with a seat in the House of Lords.

Leaving the House of Commons for ever proved to be a far harder business than I had expected. Throughout the day of Friday the 13th, my last day as one of its members, and before my appointment was known, I clung almost fiercely to its green benches, and at four o'clock, just before the House adjourned for the week-end, I passed very regretfully and for the last time through the Aye Lobby, in support of the Government.

I remember that during my last day in the House my mind strayed from the consideration of the matters before it, to the work that I had attempted within its walls, and to memories of some of the more distinguished among those with whose work I had been associated.

Almost first among these memories was that of the pathetic figure of Mr. Bonar Law, whose political blows were always softened by a kindly and very weary smile, and who could say 'no' graciously, as well as firmly. He was unreservedly liked on the Labour benches,

and when he died we shared to the full the grief of his political friends.

Then there was the distinguished political figure of Mr. Asquith, who was invariably respected, generally admired, but not always liked. His austere manner did not invite friendly contacts, and I never saw a back-bench Labour member venture to speak to him. I certainly never did. It is very likely that I do injustice to his memory; but to me he seemed much like a human island, very rich in natural resources, but heavily fortified and unapproachable. The best thing that can be said of him, or indeed of any man, is that those who knew him best trusted him most. His speeches in the House of Commons were models of what parliamentary oratory should be, and I listened to them with ever-increasing pleasure and profit.

Mr. Lloyd George was not only sometimes approachable; there were occasions when he was even genial. The flash-point of his temper was, however, dangerously low. His quickly changing moods suggested an April day, with its capricious alternations of frowns and smiles. Ready in debate, quick in apt illustration and scorching phrase, a desirable friend, a formidable enemy, he was always interesting and always incalculable. I was personally indebted to him for generous words of encouragement.

I listened attentively to the speeches of Lord Hugh Cecil, on the rare occasions when he thought the House of Commons worthy of his presence; but I never understood how his reputation as a parliamentary speaker had been gained. I was in no way prejudiced against him, but no speech of his that I heard was distinguished in the quality of either thought or form.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin had not an enemy on our side of the House, and he was trusted by all our members. His weakness as a leader of the Tory Party was that he was incapable of political meanness. He neither made low accusations nor delivered foul blows; and if he rarely soared into the regions of lofty rhetoric or of fine achievement, he never descended to the commonplace in either. Reliable, friendly, and solid, without tricks or frills, he was liked by everybody.

As a political controversialist Mr. Winston Churchill had two chronic disabilities; he could never forget the general strike of 1921, nor ever remember the return to the gold standard of 1925. Antwerp and Gallipoli were also completely forgotten and, for personal reasons, he appeared to have a passionate hatred of the

word 'consistency.' His speeches were usually provocative and refreshing, and if they did not always add to the knowledge of the House, they invariably contributed to its mirth. He was habitually playful, and sometimes consciously malicious; often bright, but seldom instructive. Whether you liked him or not, at any hour, depended upon his temper at the time. Like the little girl with the curl, when he was nice, which was often, he was nice indeed; but when his temper mastered him, and this happened more than once on any day, he was as horrid as they make them. In spite of his obvious faults, he was popular with the Labour members; he was liked, but not trusted; but when he was seriously injured in a characteristic endeavour to cross Fifth Avenue in New York when the traffic lights were against him, our men were as much distressed as were his best political friends. But how like Winston to go against the signals!

I saw something of Mr. Amery during the period when he was the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and I admired both his industry and his devotion to the cause of empire development. Of the strictest sect of Birmingham Toryism, one always knew where he stood. At the first sound of the words 'Free Trade' he was ready to draw his sword for battle, and I could imagine him offering up a daily prayer of gratitude that there were foreigners who could be taxed.

Sir Austen Chamberlain was also generally liked. He was impeccably courteous, and dignified. His style of oratory, especially on grand occasions, was reminiscent of that of a previous generation; it was sonorous and stately in phrase, without, however, the fault of obscurity or involved parenthesis; while in the exacting and testing work of committees, when complicated questions had to be considered, his capacity for clear thinking and lucid statement was abundantly obvious. He was a kindly critic, and he failed only when he tried to be furious.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain only slightly resembles his distinguished half-brother. He is unchallengeably capable, and that he does not lack political courage was shown when, amidst the frowns of his political associates and city friends, he supported the principle of municipal banks; but he maintained a consistent Brahminical aloofness from the lower political castes on the Labour benches. Respected for his lucidity, capacity, and straightforwardness, he nevertheless conveyed the impression that he had been 'weaned on a pickle.'

Sir John Simon, for whom I had a personal regard, had frequently encouraged me with words appreciative of my work, and I greatly admired the hard brilliance of his mind. It gripped a fact or a fallacy with the sure firmness of a steel trap. Nature appeared to have blessed him with every human quality except those of a glowing emotion and a genial warmth of phrase.

Sir Herbert Samuel had perhaps the most tidy mind of any one in the House; his speeches were always clear; his arguments were marshalled in effective order, and he did not lack a well-controlled enthusiasm for the causes that he espoused. It pleased me to be able to believe that he owed not a little of his effectiveness to the fact that he was a philosopher as well as a politician.

I omit from these memories the names of my own political colleagues, for all of whom I had a great regard. Many among them had gifts of capacity and character not inferior to those of the notable men whose names I have mentioned. I left the House of Commons with an undiminished respect for its functions, and for the men and women who, in spite of mean detractors, maintain unimpaired its ancient quality.

Members of Parliament of all parties were generous in their approval of the honour which had been conferred upon me, and I never saw any adverse criticism of my appointment in the newspapers. Mr. Garvin, in the *Observer*, was kind enough to say that 'the House of Lords ought to welcome Lord Snell of Plumstead. He will bring it realism, sincerity, and a gifted tongue. He has served his party long and well. The delicate position of chairman of the consultative committee did not weaken, but added to the respect felt for him by the Government and the rank and file. He will add a new note of power to the Lords debates, for many years we hope.'

Friends belonging to many religious sects and political parties were good enough to send to me generous letters of congratulation, but none gave me more pleasure than those received from Mr. Warren and Mr. Kentish Wright, of the Nottingham Unitarian School, which I had been asked to leave forty-two years earlier. My transference to the House of Lords did not, however, please everybody in my own party. Attendance at Labour meetings became for the first time an unpleasant experience, and on more than one occasion I was cut, or snubbed, by old associates, regardless of the fact that I had gone to the Lords, not for personal reasons, but to satisfy party as well as constitutional requirements.

Looking back upon what I suppose was the most striking episode of my life I can with complete sincerity affirm that the social distinction supposed to be associated with the peerage meant nothing at all to me, nor did membership of the House of Lords modify, in the least degree, either my political outlook or my habit of life. It imposed upon me some disadvantages and financial sacrifices, and gave to me but few obvious compensations. When I became one of its members I quite certainly never expected to become the appointed leader of the official opposition, but however long I may remain there, I shall not forget the quarry whence I was hewn; and no one knows better than myself where I belong. I remain one hundred per cent loyal—joyfully, resolutely, even aggressively loyal—to the main convictions of my life.

It was perhaps the strong puritanical strain in my character which caused me to shrink from the ordeal of my introduction to the House of Lords, in full robes and cocked hat, more than from any other event in my life, and I endeavoured to keep as secret as possible the day and the hour when the ceremony would take place. Therefore, as the *Birmingham Post* remarked the following day: 'There were not many eyes to watch the official entry of the new Labour baron into the ranks of the peerage. "My Lords" numbered a mere handful. A few comrades from the House of Commons looked in. The great outside world was represented by half a dozen members of "the fourth estate." That was all. Never before has there been an opportunity to see one who started life in the footsteps of his father, an agricultural labourer, take his place among the peers of the realm, full-fledged in scarlet and ermine and cocked hat. *Hansard* coldly will record that Lord Snell of Plumstead took his seat and subscribed to the oath of allegiance "in the usual manner," and posterity will have to search other annals to discover that this particular elevation to the peerage marked the reaching of the highest rung of the ladder ever attained by one who started at the lowest. Some of us remember when the presence in the House of Commons of Joseph Arch was counted a unique example of progress from the soil to the Senate Chamber. Harry Snell, a farm lad in Arch's day of triumph, has notably outstripped the political achievement begun under the Wellesbourne chestnut tree. He may, as a youth, have been greatly awed in the presence of a peer. To-day he was literally "all of a tremble" when he became one himself.'

My loyal friends, the electors of East Woolwich, accepted with

their accustomed courage the inconveniences of a by-election, and I parted from them with sincere regret. My association with the constituency had not been clouded by even a moment of misunderstanding, and to Mr. William Barefoot, J.P., the secretary of the local Labour Party; to Miss Mabel Crout, J.P., his assistant; to Mr. Harry Sykes and Mr. Jack Laurence, the chairmen; to Mr. James Newman, the treasurer; and to hundreds of devoted helpers, I was under a deep and lasting obligation. Plumstead covers nearly the whole of the East Woolwich constituency and, as an expression of my gratitude to its citizens, I associated it with my new official title.

I remained at the India Office for just over five months, and I retired automatically when the Labour Government resigned in the August of 1931. The circumstances which caused Mr. Ramsay MacDonald to resign and which led to the formation of a 'National' Government were known only to the Prime Minister himself and his cabinet colleagues. The junior ministers had no more information than that which appeared in the newspapers. They were simply the tragic orphans of the storm. Whether Mr. MacDonald was justified in resigning owing to the condition of the nation at that time; whether he treated his cabinet colleagues with the consideration to which by precedent they were entitled; whether he should have undertaken, without their knowledge, to form a 'National' Government; and whether those among them who could not accept the situation as he presented it to them merited the slander to which they were subjected, history will, in due time, decide.

My own reaction to the circumstances of the crisis was based upon a lifelong acquaintance with most of the ministers concerned. I did not accept, without qualification, the explanation that, in order to gratify his personal vanity, Mr. MacDonald determined at all costs to betray colleagues with whom he had worked for two generations. Neither could I join the ignoble chorus of those who asserted that Mr. Henderson, Mr. Webb, Mr. Lansbury, and others, whose record of service was as long and as honourable as that of the Prime Minister himself, had 'cowardly run away' from their responsibilities. There used to be a story of a British ambassador to a foreign court who had sent to his Government a dispatch in which he was reported to have said that 'some say that the king is dead; others that this is not so; but for my part, I believe neither of these stories.' And I believed that there

must be another, and better, explanation of the fall of the Labour Government.

The differences of outlook which sometimes so disastrously cause old friends to part, are rarely the direct issues of right and wrong. More often they are the result of their varying estimates of the degree of right or wrong involved, 'for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.' The separation of these old and tried servants of the Labour cause occurred during a crisis which was not of their making, a crisis which required hurried decisions on matters that were as yet obscure, and about which not only the ablest minds, but also the oldest friends, might reasonably differ. The result was separation, and lamentably bitter speech on both sides. Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Snowden used words which were unworthy of them—words that were unnecessary in defence of their own actions.

If we assume that in the cabinet discussions which preceded the crisis, neither side to the controversy was either perfect in patience or wholly convinced one way or the other, we shall probably get near to the truth.

A considerable factor in the discussions of those anxious days must have been the aloof and baffling personality of the Prime Minister. I have had the privilege of knowing Mr. MacDonald for forty years, and I have been continuously associated with him in many public activities. My regard for him has been sincere and constant, and had I ever required his personal help in any matter affecting my own life I am quite certain that it would have been instantly and generously given. Therefore I knew him as well as most people knew him; but between him and the rest of mankind there exists a psychological barrier, which only those who are forcefully insensitive can break through. I think that I understood the nature of this barrier better than most people, for I also am not 'a good mixer,' and I know, from my own experience, that the alleged unsocial habits of a busy man are rarely little more than the unconscious protective attitude of a constantly preoccupied mind.

This lack of spontaneous geniality on the part of Mr. MacDonald undoubtedly led the rank and file of the Labour members to believe that he regarded them with disdain, and it helped to prejudice their minds when the crisis came. His industry was prodigious; but he could never be made to realize that his habitual absence from the party meetings slowly undermined his influence

over his followers. Moreover, whenever he received the members of the consultative committee in his own room he conveyed the impression that they were unwelcome by dividing his attention between the business about which they had come to see him, and the departmental papers which were on his desk awaiting his signature. This was an old fault, if, indeed, it was a fault. Of his first administration Lord Haldane declared that 'it was almost impracticable to get hold of him even for a quarter of an hour, and the consequences were, at times, mischievous.'

It is not unfair to say that Mr. MacDonald's most obvious fault was that he constantly exhausted himself by doing routine tasks which dozens of his colleagues would gladly have done for him. But if his belief that no one except himself could do things properly was a fault, it was not an ignoble one. Few among his critics will withhold from him the respect that rightly belongs to men of industry and capacity.

Politicians and journalists still consistently endeavour to establish in the public mind the calculated fallacy that Labour ministers must be incompetent. That was not Lord Haldane's view, and he was no mean judge of men. 'Ramsay MacDonald,' he said, speaking of his first administration, 'managed his cabinets very well; he had always read his papers and knew the points. Indeed, all the members of the cabinet worked hard and came prepared. Nor were they lengthy of speech on this account. They made their points briefly and forcibly, trained to do so by trade union discipline.'¹

When the National Government took office in 1931 the Prime Minister was good enough to ask me to remain at the India Office, and at the time I wished that I could have accepted the invitation to do so. I liked the work, and I hated to give it up on the eve of the reassembling of the Second Round Table Conference, but I knew that an Under-Secretary had no influence on Government policy, and I feared that under a Government which was predominantly Tory in composition I might find myself associated with acts of repression in India which I could not have defended. There was also a further reason why I could not serve under the new Government. I had been a member of the Labour Party since the day it was created, and I had been a member of the House of Lords for only six months; I could not therefore lay myself open to the charge that, for the rewards of office, I had deserted my

¹ Lord Haldane, *Autobiography*.

party as soon as loyalty to it involved personal sacrifice. I therefore asked the Prime Minister to permit me to decline his invitation, and he accepted my decision with friendly understanding. I have never doubted, even for a moment, that I chose the right course.

As soon as the National Government was formed Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Snowden found themselves unrestrainedly adored by the Press, and by a class of people who had hitherto consistently maligned and despised them. They were at once welcomed in circles from which they had previously been excluded. Duchesses invited them to their drawing-rooms; they became heroes in a night. How they must have hated it all! Had I felt it right to join the Government I might perhaps have been able to withstand the scorn of my old friends, but I could not have endured that.

The insincerity of this unusual adoration was soon revealed. Only a few weeks before the fall of the Labour Government Mr. Snowden had been described as 'an acidulated Cobdenite pedant'; the day after it fell he had become, according to the *Observer*, 'the noblest Roman of them all.' But on the day that he resigned from the National Government he had returned, according to the *Morning Post*, to a position of 'cantankerous isolation'; and very shortly afterwards he had become a 'malevolent little chameleon who has succeeded in fouling every political nest before he leaves it.'¹ Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Thomas have since heard in public criticisms concerning them which their new friends had throughout made in private.

The only criticism that I have made of the Labour ministers who joined the National Government was that they attacked unfairly their late colleagues who remained loyal to the Labour Party. Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Snowden, and Mr. Thomas knew that the Labour Party, as well as the nation, had to be saved; they knew that had it been absorbed in the so-called 'National' Government its independence as a political force would have been lost for ever; and they knew that the hearts of hundreds of thousands of those who had laboured to create and sustain it, and whose dearest social hopes it embodied, would have been broken. And they also knew—no one better—that on the ruins of those hopes would immediately have arisen a powerful, irresponsible, and revolutionary Communist Party. If that would have been a misfortune for the

¹ J. T. O'Connor, M.P., quoted in the *Daily Herald* (7th August 1932).

nation, those who stood by the Labour Party at that time prevented it from happening.

The Labour Party is to-day the one safe bulwark in defence of democracy in this country. At a meeting of the members of the party, held in the middle of the crisis in 1931, Lord Sankey expressed his belief that as 'Mr. MacDonald had saved the nation,' so 'Mr. Henderson had saved the Labour Party.' He might, in addition, have said, that the Labour Party was an essential condition of the tranquillity and safety of the nation.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOUSE OF LORDS, INDIA, AND THE L.C.C.

A House of Legislature, hereditary and irresponsible, cannot be a permanent institution in a free country.—JOHN BRIGHT.

THE reader may perhaps be interested to know how the aristocratic environment of the House of Peers impressed the new member who, by birth, experience, and affection, belonged to the working classes.

I cannot in this short chapter describe more than a few of my reactions to the unaccustomed temper and social outlook of the House of Lords. I desire, however, to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the generous and never-failing courtesy of the peers of all parties, and of the officials of the House, to the somewhat apprehensive recruit to their ranks.

The House of Lords is a picturesque and somewhat austere assembly, and for some time after I had become a member of it I felt as I imagine a very sensitive small boy must feel during his first term at a superior school; and my sense of discomfort became acute when, within a few days after my introduction to the House, I was called upon, as the responsible minister, to make a careful defence of the Government's Indian policy. Lord Peel, who had initiated the discussion, sought to induce me to go into wider considerations than those indicated in the terms of questions which he had placed on the order paper; but I did not oblige him. Perhaps the greatest lesson of my life has been that I have never regretted what I did not say; and I therefore cautiously replied that while 'my desire to please the noble earl' was 'intense, I must not, on this occasion, allow him to lead me into the pathway of political indiscretion.'

It is not clear to me now, why I had suspected that their lordships might receive ungenerously the new plebeian minister who, for political and constitutional reasons, had been sent to their exclusive assembly. I merely record the fact that, because I belonged to a social stratum altogether different from their own, I had feared that they might meet me with a strictly formal and repelling politeness or, on the other hand, welcome me on the

assumption that I should adapt my convictions and allegiances to the traditions of my new environment.

My apprehensions were in any case altogether unnecessary. Some of their lordships were, I believe, a little curious to see how the new minister would acquit himself; but I received from them all both courtesy and consideration. Friendships, such as I had enjoyed with members of all parties in the House of Commons, do not appear to exist in the Upper House; but there is a rare quality of quiet courtesy which is neither familiar nor patronizing. The Lords of Parliament may not be great statesmen, and their personal experience of the anxieties of commercial and political life may be incomplete; but, judged by the standard of considerate human relationships with their fellow countrymen, they are, beyond all question, great gentlemen. Their social training is faultless, their manners impeccable, and they would as soon agree to wear a bowler hat with a morning coat, or brown shoes with a dark suit, as be guilty of deliberate discourtesy to a political opponent.

Their duties in the House of Peers are performed with a natural dignity, restraint, and grace, which rather suggests the anarchist ideal of liberty and responsibility without law or coercion. They rarely, in public, show either personal affection or dislike; and their emotions are sternly controlled. They conduct public business without rules of order, because rules are superfluous. No one is authorized to suppress irrelevance, the use of unbecoming language, the imputation of motives or reflections of a personal character on another peer, because such things are not done. Their lordships would no more think of offending in these respects than they would kill a fox with a gun, or shoot a bird on its nest. *Noblesse oblige*.

When I became a member of the House of Lords I was most of all impressed by its low emotional temperature. The spirit of the House of Commons is high, alert, and capricious. It is generally enthusiastic, frequently provocative, and passionate. Its proceedings are enlivened by demonstrations of approval or stinging derision; and its quick transitions from grave to gay, from party challenge to general appreciation, are a recognized part of its charm and quality.

The mental climate of the House of Lords is habitually torpid. There are no refreshing variations. The prevailing note is one of gloom. Its blood pressure is definitely and persistently subnormal. The Upper House is a picturesque anachronism in the modern

world, a solemn retreat in which it is almost improper to smile, vulgar to joke, and bad form to show any sign of enthusiasm for public causes. This is perhaps the reason why, in comparison with the House of Commons, its proceedings appear to be so lifeless. Their lordships do not descend to the questionable practice of political debate; they gravely converse together concerning public affairs, which are rarely permitted to encroach upon the sacred hour of dinner. Their lordships like their soup hot.

Admirers of the House of Lords frequently commend it as a most excellent revising chamber, in which the details of complicated Bills, which have too hurriedly passed the House of Commons, are subjected to meticulous and experienced scrutiny. I do not think that this generous estimate of its qualities could be defended with ease. As a revising body it is in my opinion inconsiderable, if not actually weak. Its qualities are perhaps of a higher kind. It is when great imperial issues are under consideration that its finest powers are revealed. On such occasions it frequently rises to a level of dignity and informed authority, which is seldom reached and never surpassed, even by the House of Commons itself. No one talks to the gallery, which is usually empty, nor to Press correspondents, who are generally absent, and whose papers merely summarize its proceedings, because habitual calmness makes poor newspaper copy. There are, in consequence, few cheap or merely provocative speeches; but there are many which are distinguished both in form and quality.

The shortcomings of the House of Lords are obvious to all, except those among its members who believe that their personal experience of the problems of business life is as close as that of those who are directly engaged in trying to solve them; and nothing more quickly arouses the resentment of their lordships than the suggestion that the working man, with a large family, an uncertain shelter, and a precarious occupation, lives in a world, the nature of which they do not, and indeed cannot, know. Many of them distrust change from sheer lack of imagination, and their hostility to the outlook of the Labour Party, for example, has the fierce constancy of an unchecked obsession. When trying to present, in May 1934, the outlines of the opposition case to Lord Salisbury's Bill for the Reform of the House of Lords, which was designed to make Toryism safe for eternity, I ventured to say that 'my admiration for your lordships' House has never passed the bounds of decorum, but I once more acknowledge the courtesy of its members

who have considerably listened to my speeches without a too obvious impatience.'

Soon after the Labour Government fell in August 1931 I received an urgent invitation from the Royal Institute of International Affairs to proceed immediately to China, as one of the British delegation to the triennial conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, which had been summoned to meet in Shanghai. I had long desired to visit the Far East, and I accepted the invitation with great satisfaction; but Mr. Henderson insisted that the Second Round Table Conference, which was to assemble in the early autumn, had a greater claim to my attention as the late Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India, and as one of the representatives of the Labour Party. It was a great disappointment to me to miss the chance of a journey round the world, but I unhesitatingly agreed to give it up. Two years later, in 1933, I had the privilege of attending the conference of the institute which was held at Banff, in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and of meeting and conferring with distinguished representatives from America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, and the Philippine Islands. It was an educational experience which I would not willingly have missed.

I had for nearly the whole of my adult life been deeply interested in the government and the welfare of the Indian people, and from the day that I entered upon my duties at the India Office in March 1931, to the hour when these lines were written, my mind was continuously occupied and fascinated with the Indian problem. The Second Round Table Conference enabled me to have daily contact with the distinguished and well-informed Indian men and women who so ably and courageously represented the many races, castes, and interests of the 350 millions of our Indian fellow-subjects, and I was honoured to enjoy their friendship. It was a great test of their quality that, in a Western environment and speaking a language not their own, they were able to meet on equal terms some of the most highly trained minds that England possessed, and it is a privilege to acknowledge that they acquitted themselves with a distinction which did honour to their country. The Lord Chancellor (Lord Sankey), who presided over the Table, met them with a courtesy and dignity equal to their own, and he continuously encouraged them to contribute their best thought to the solution of the most difficult imperial problem of our time.

The Second Round Table Conference was favoured with the

attendance, as one of the Indian representatives, of Mahatma Gandhi, who, at that time, exercised an almost decisive authority over millions of the Indian people. I was in every way favourably disposed towards Gandhi because, whatever his faults may be as a responsible leader of a great cause, he had succeeded in arousing, in the consciousness of the Indian people, the sense of nationality and freedom, and I still believe that his campaign against caste discrimination is of fundamental importance for the future of India. I was, however, no blind admirer of the Mahatma. I sat in conference with him day after day for many weeks, but I never got to know him. The Labour representatives on the Table supported him on many occasions, but he never sought any contact with them. It was his calculated habit to arrive when the rest of the delegates were seated, and to hurry away as soon as they rose from their labours. I acknowledge Gandhi's spiritual eminence, and I believe that, in spite of his many faults as a practical leader, his influence in India has been both rare and beneficent. But, after weeks of association with him, in the difficult task of trying to solve problems of practical and perilous significance, I became convinced that the words 'sainthood' and 'statesmanship' did not necessarily mean the same thing.

The Labour Party, mistakenly as I thought, but I was not consulted on the matter, decided not to be represented at the Third Round Table Conference; but when the Joint Select Committee of the two Houses of Parliament was set up to consider and report concerning the famous White Paper, four members of the party, including myself, were invited to join it, and I shall always regard my membership of that committee as the most responsible task of my life. During the first six months of our labours delegates from India and Burma sat with us, taking their part on equal terms with the members of the committee, in the examination of witnesses and in making valuable personal contributions to our understanding of a vast and unbelievably complicated problem. No one with an impartial mind could have worked by their side for many months without being impressed by their qualities of mind and character; and I consider it a privilege to have co-operated with them and, on occasion, to have wrestled with them, concerning issues of incalculable importance. They were quick to appreciate the weight of an argument, ready to compromise when a principle was not involved, and their natural dignity and oriental courtesy were constant. The background of their culture and their practical



Sport and General

AT THE LONDON FIRE BRIGADE DISPLAY, 1934

experience were different from those of their British colleagues; but, after months of exposition and argument, they returned to India without sacrificing a principle or losing a friend.

I have never served on a committee which was more conscious of its responsibility, and however much their report to Parliament may be challenged, it was the result of eighteen months' exacting labour, and of intense research and reflection. Lord Linlithgow presided over the committee's deliberations with enviable distinction. He was impartial, patient, practical, and imperturbable; and the mastery of the complicated issues of the White Paper, displayed by Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, won the unstinted admiration of the whole committee, who trust that the result of their labours may bless both India and mankind.

The triennial election of the members of the London County Council took place on the 8th March 1934, when, for the first time in its history, a Labour majority was returned. The usual prophecies of disaster were immediately forthcoming, and some of the newspapers seemed willing to try to damage the council's credit in order to gratify a political prejudice. The City received the electoral blow with a sullen composure, and the holders of the council's stocks kept both their heads and their money.

The result of the polling was a great surprise to me; but I was altogether unprepared when, on the 9th March, directly the full results were known, I received from Mr. Herbert Morrison, who had so brilliantly led the Labour forces to victory, the suggestion that my name should be submitted to the newly elected Labour members for their nomination as the chairman of the new council.

The proposal that I should be the first Labour chairman of the greatest municipal authority of the world was, by far, the greatest honour that I had ever received, and I deeply appreciated it. I nevertheless felt that I was too tired and overworked, with my duties on the India Joint Select Committee uncompleted, to face, with any chance of success, such new and onerous responsibilities, and I asked, on that account alone, to be excused. There was, in addition, the difficult question of the personal expenses attached to the position to be considered. The London County Council had previously allowed its chairmen to pay out of their own pockets for the hospitality which it offered to its guests. This practically restricted the choice of its chairmen to those who could meet expenses amounting to several hundred pounds a year. This was, of course, impossible so far as I was concerned, and I had to make

it clear that if I became the chairman of the council such expenses would have to be avoided.

On the 12th March 1934, three days after the proposal was first made to me, I was unanimously elected to the chair of the council, and I venture to quote here some extracts from the short address that I then gave to its members:

‘In assuming the position to which you have with real generosity appointed me, I am moved by a feeling of, I hope, legitimate pride and by a sense of profound responsibility. To be called upon to preside over this great administrative assembly, to follow the long line of distinguished servants of London who have occupied this chair, is an honour deeply appreciated, an honour which I did not seek nor expect, but one which, having come to me, I will with all my powers endeavour to deserve.

‘On looking round these familiar benches, I miss the faces of many old friends and colleagues . . . some of whom have been the victims of time, and others the victims of the electors; but I remember them all with respect and with gratitude for all that they taught me.

‘Is it necessary for me to assure you that I shall be the chairman of the council and not the chairman of a party? If it is, I give that assurance with a complete sincerity. It will be my aim so to do my work that no one shall feel aggrieved. A good chairman will sometimes have eyes that do not see, and ears that do not hear; but he must never have a mind that is inconsiderate or partial.

‘We enter upon our responsible duties with a single aim and determination—the greater good of our beloved city—the centre of our civic pride and affection, the very heart of our British civilization, and the most kindly and dignified of the world’s capitals.

‘We shall doubtless have many keen debates, and perhaps some heated controversy. Let us agree now to face them with a sense of humour, goodwill, and a generous tolerance. Then London will be helped by the stimulating clash of opinion, the sharpening of brain upon brain; but let us always remember that, while criticism is good, usually very good, for it helps to expose faults that may be corrected, constructive suggestion is better, for it adds to what may be already excellent; and co-operation and good comradeship in a responsible common task are best of all.

‘My lords, ladies, and gentlemen, the efficiency, the dignity, the purity of this great municipal assembly are renowned throughout the world. The breath of scandal has never touched it: its honour is very dear to all of us, and to the citizens of London. With great humility, therefore, but nevertheless with some assurance, I ask for your kindly co-operation to the end that, under my chairmanship, those high qualities shall not be impaired.’

The County Hall is an amazing and fascinating place. Within its walls are centred the major municipal activities of a population larger than that of some of the dominions of the empire, and of some independent states. It exercises authority over an area of 117 square miles; it educates 780,000 children and adults, maintains 100 hospitals, institutions, and residential schools, and also about 100 parks and open-air spaces. Its employees amount to the astonishing total of 72,000, a number greater than the population of the city of Exeter, or of the borough of Hastings.

To have a working acquaintance with its many activities, is to possess a liberal education; and upon the members of the council and the permanent staff, who serve them so efficiently, there rests a great and honourable responsibility. It is the greatest satisfaction of my life to have been permitted for three years in succession to preside over their deliberations.

CHAPTER XVIII

POST TEMPESTATEM TRANQUILLITAS

What I aspired to be
And was not, comforts me.

ROBERT BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

INCIDENTS taken from the record of a man's changing thoughts, activities, and aims, his alternating enthusiasms and depressions, his troubled searchings and sorrowful renunciations, more nearly represent the hasty snapshot of an hour than the balanced picture of a life, and the story of every man, whose mind is influenced by increased knowledge and experience, is full of inconsistencies.

What pliable clay we poor mortals are, and into what strange and unexpected shapes we are moulded by ignorance and by circumstance; and when we seek to justify, even to ourselves, our thoughts and acts, how intensely we wish that many hasty words and foolish deeds could be recalled! If only it were given to us to try again!

As I listen to immodest expounders of the Christian life, I sometimes wonder whether they are made of the same frail material as myself. Their words too often suggest that virtue comes to them without striving; but their haughty condemnation of the weaknesses of other men indicate that they are themselves stiff with spiritual pride. If they are indeed immune from the temptations that often beset and sometimes debase their less fortunate neighbours, they should be humbly and silently thankful, and above all else, avoid the grievous sin of self-righteousness.

Then at the balance let's be mute,

We never can adjust it;

What's done we partly may compute,

But know not what's resisted.

I dare not close this story of my own experiences, without the very frank avowal that I have not found virtue, even according to my own standards, easily attainable. Many of my best moments have, alas, been followed by worst moments, and I have too frequently permitted myself to be satisfied with what was merely the

second best. But I have always tried to be honest with myself. I have never attempted to cook the accounts of my soul. It may be an excusable convention to cheat in business, and to lie in politics. That is as it may be; but a man's dealings with his own moral life must be fair and square. And now that the shadows lengthen, and the course is nearly run, the most that I dare say of myself is that my failures of thought and of deed, have been succeeded by dark hours of repentance. It is 'what I aspired to be' but was not, that 'comforts me.'

I have been enviably happy in my spiritual life, and have no recantations to make. If I had to live my life over again, I should wish only to do better what I have sought to do. But there would be at least one drastic change that I should make. I would not again let at least a quarter of my life be filched away from worthwhile tasks in order to attend to the emphatic trifles of fussy and insistent people.

Amid the varying impressions and allegiances of my life there remain central principles which to me are as bright and fixed as the stars. I believe unswervingly in what Carlyle characteristically called 'the hocus-pocus of Reason and Understanding.' Reason is the centre of a gravity upon which I willingly take my stand. Emotion has its place, and a high place, in man's life; but for me reason must for ever remain seated on her shining throne. Reason and emotion; both, but each in its place is best, and the need for the application of an enlightened reason to the affairs of the world was never more obvious than now.

I am also satisfied that, in regard to religious and scientific knowledge, there is no last word, and that unless thought upon these great themes is free and encouraged, religion at least will not, as Martineau pointed out, grow to statelier proportions, but continue to produce lateral deformities.

Not since I was a boy have I believed in the dreadful doctrine of the total depravity of the individual soul, nor have I since then believed in the total depravity of human society. Everywhere there appears to be growth and improvement. Man is continuously and with increasing success mastering the latent brute that is within him.

I have no dogmatic conviction concerning the continuity of personality after death. I am content to wait for knowledge.

I believe in the liberty of man to think, to explore, to grow; and in the right of the individual soul, in every generation and

under all conditions, to erect its own altars, uncoerced by priest or creed.

It is unlikely that my opinions on these fundamental matters will henceforth undergo serious modification.

Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee—
Thee and no other! Stand or fall by them,
That is the part for thee.

BROWNING.

My religious development has included both reverence for knowledge and gratitude to the prophets and teachers of every race and creed. I have believed that no one spiritual leader was the perfect, or the final, revealer of righteousness; that the best among men is not all good, nor the worst all bad; and my own conception of moral values has imposed upon me the duty to endeavour to make of myself, regardless of occasion or circumstance, the kind of man which, in my best moments, I think that I ought to be.

Pious supernaturalists will promptly affirm that this kind of outlook has no claim to be called religious. Well, let them do so. If I do not believe as they believe, they do not believe as I believe, and there the issue must be left. But if to be religious means that reason must be rejected, and that man's life must be influenced only by storms of emotion, then I am not in any sense a religious-minded man, and I think that I never shall be. A man may not be counted as religious when he is measured by the yard-stick of current orthodoxy, but he may nevertheless be the willing servant of high and eternal values. My way of approach to these great problems may have deprived me of the elevating ecstasy enjoyed by the mystic; but I have had my share of modest satisfactions, derived from a philosophy of life which has had the full assent of all my faculties. Creeds that have secured the glad loyalty of thousands of men whose judgment and character I respect, have often appeared to me to be merely the coverings—and too frequently the grave-clothes—of past religious appreciations—the burden, rather than the body, of religious development.

The great religions of mankind have imposed upon their adherents harmful and unnecessary tests. He who desires to join the religious fellowship of Islam must accept Muhammad as the only inspired messenger of God; of Buddhism, the deified Gautama; of Parseism, an inspired Zoroaster; of Christianity, a supernatural Jesus. The Greeks made morality subservient to the

aesthetic end; the Jews to the will of Jehovah; the Christian Churches to their creeds.

My own life has been governed by successive and not altogether consistent imperatives. When I was a farm lad my conscience told me that only wicked men did not believe every word in the Bible had come direct from the awful mouth of God; that it was wrong to work or play on the sabbath day; that it was my duty to be satisfied with the position in life to which I had been called; that I should accept as truth the teaching of the vicar of the parish; and that I should humble myself before my economic and social superiors. This type of conscience was superseded by other types, each of which imposed upon me special and differing obligations, while the conscience which now orders me about, in addition to its appearing to be more peremptory and inconsiderate than any of the subjective tyrants that preceded it, is so different from them that were they to meet they would not know each other.

Looking back upon the many opportunities for service that I have missed, I am aware that had I enjoyed an ampler reserve of physical and nervous vitality, a sounder digestion, and a better capacity for sleep, I might have done many things that I had to leave undone. Political life in particular makes exacting demands upon a man's vital resources, and I doubt whether in any other public activity impaired strength places a man at a greater disadvantage.

I think, also, that had I been politically or socially ambitious, and had I planned to achieve particular results, I might have had more of what men call success. But, although I have been engaged throughout the whole of my adult life in advocating and organizing unpopular causes, I can with sincerity assert that I never gave ten minutes' thought to the business of organizing my own career. I never asked for a favour, and I never sought either the notice of the Press, or the approval of the powerful. For better or for worse, I have taken myself as I am, and have done my job as well as I could, following the truth as I have seen it, and facing without hesitation or complaint whatever penalties loyalty to my convictions have brought.

I am not conceited enough to assume that much of what I have believed and taught could not be assailed from the standpoint of truth; but I do believe that in any reasonable contest the main convictions of my life would not be overthrown. Socialism, as I have understood and advocated it, may never be realized; but I

have the satisfaction of knowing that the capitalism that I have opposed is to-day in full, even in panic-stricken, retreat in every country in the world. When it is finally driven from the field the universe will be a cleaner and happier place. This desirable end may not have to wait until an adequately organized Socialist party is able to kick it into oblivion; the final blow may well be delivered by its own supporters, who no longer find its rewards adequate when they follow its savage injunction to climb upon the shoulders of another and seek to remain there. . . . 'The country would like to see the power of the State resolutely applied to secure during the next few years, *and at need to compel*, the consolidated efficiency of the chief staple industries.'¹

Meanwhile, the Labour movement has essential work to do. The trade unions should remain vigilant and strong; for nothing in the workman's past experience of the employing classes, and nothing that he knows of them at the present time, would justify the belief that, if the profits on industrial enterprises were increased by five, ten, twenty, or even fifty per cent, one additional penny would voluntarily be passed on to the worker as increased wages.

The workers themselves are not perfect. They are to a great extent what centuries of material and spiritual subordination to their social superiors have made them. They have been driven like cattle, they have often been housed worse than cattle, and they carry with them the marks of their history.

I have tried in these pages to recall some of the strivings and inspirations of the recent past. The future is with the young. What will they do with the world? I try to keep loyal to my faith in them, but they sometimes frighten me. They seem for the most part to be indifferent both to their heritage and to their responsibilities. They may differ from each other about many things, but they are united in their contempt for experience. They are so certain that youth alone is right. They may believe in liberty and progress, but they have no disciplined passion to defend and promote these virtues. They will neither 'fight for king and country,' nor adequately organize themselves to prevent war. The only things they take on trust are Fascism and Communism. In everything relating to sex they insist upon discussion being free and continuous; but of well-sustained preparation for public work I see very little. The athlete and the cinema-star are their gods. In many ways the youth of our time is so frank and fine that I try

¹ J. L. Garvin, *Observer*, 21st January 1934.



TO-DAY

Odhams Press

hard to keep my faith in it; but I am sometimes thankful that I am growing old.

There is perhaps less social ugliness and unheeded suffering in England than when my life began. But the physical condition of the mass of the workers is still dangerously low, as the following remark by the Adjutant-General shows: 'In certain areas—for instance, the big industrial area of the north—the percentage of rejections rises to 68. It is awful.'¹ The reason for this state of affairs is expressed in the words of President Franklin Roosevelt: 'The difficult and dangerous situation into which the United States had got itself was due to the general attitude: "every man for himself; the devil take the hindmost."' Individualists were seeking quick riches at the expense of other individualists. . . . One year ago we were suffering under economic pressures so intolerable that collapse was at hand. We had arrived at the day to make our choice. The American people responded to the call for action with eager enlistment—enlistment in the struggle against ruthless self-seeking, reckless greed, and economic anarchy. We undertook by lawful, constitutional processes, to reorganize a disintegrating system of production and exchange . . . for the greater happiness and well-being of the American people.'

But there is also a greater tolerance of injustice. Our fathers had a capacity for moral indignation which we have mostly lost.

Life for me has been a wonderful experience. I would not have missed it for anything, but I should not like to go through it again. It has been a strenuous business, with its disappointments and its compensations nicely balanced. I have learned many interesting things, but, as the end approaches, I am astonished at my own ignorance.

What are the subjective compensations, the wages of the searcher after truth and better ways of living? They may not be fully realized even by himself; but among them is the sustaining belief that other men, in days beyond the allotted span of his own life, will reap where he has sown, and that in ways he cannot see the wise use of his postponed power will help to secure for them a fuller and a finer life.

Finally I express my deep gratitude to many revered teachers whose thoughts and words have helped me, and to colleagues in many enterprises, for their patience, example, and wise counsel.

¹ *News Chronicle*, 20th January 1934.

Is there a life beyond the grave where men may try again? That is not given to me to know.

We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour.

WORDSWORTH, *After-thought*.

I look to the future with a complete serenity. If what I have believed and sought to do has been in the way of truth and righteousness, it is well. If, in spite of all, I have been mistaken, both in thought and deed; who shall say that it is not also well?

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